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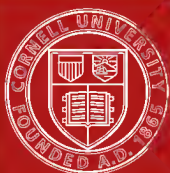
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GLUCK AND THE OPERA

GLUCK AND THE OPERA

A STUDY IN MUSICAL HISTORY

BY

ERNEST NEWMAN

LONDON: BERTRAM DOBELL
77 CHARING CROSS ROAD

1895

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TO

JOHN M. ROBERTSON

GLUCK

*Oft treibt es mich an hellen Wintertagen,
An deinem ehrnen Bild vorbeizugehen,
Dir in das strenge Angesicht zu sehen,
Und jedesmal mit innigem Behagen.
Wusst' einer nichts von dir, doch müsst' er sagen:
Das war ein Geist von frischem, scharfem Wehen,
Dem konnten keine Nebel widerstehen,
Und Wolken wusst' er in die Flucht zu jagen.*

*Ja, Wahrheit gabst du wieder deiner Kunst,
Verschmähtest leerer Töne süßem Tand,
Auf die Gefahr, der Menge zu missfallen.
Lessing der Oper; die durch Göttergunst
Bald auch in Mozart ihren Goethe fand:
Der Grösste nicht, doch ehrenwert vor allen.*

DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS.

P R E F A C E

So far as I am aware, there is no English biography of Gluck. The article by M. Gustave Chouquet in Grove's "Dictionary of Music and Musicians" is grossly inadequate, and little more can be said of the late Dr. Hueffer's article in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" (9th ed.) For English readers, by far the best account of the musician and his work is that in Naumann's "History of Music," translated by Mr. Ferdinand Praeger.

Apart from the usual articles in the French and German Dictionaries and Histories, and the treatment of Gluck in books and articles dealing with the history of the opera, there are several foreign studies of the life and works of the master. Anton Schmid's "C. W. Ritter von Gluck, dessen Leben und Wirken" (Leipzig, 1854), is a very detailed biography, containing almost everything that is known of the life of Gluck. By far the best of all books on the subject, however, is the celebrated "Gluck und die Oper" of Adolph Bernhard Marx (2 vols., Berlin, 1863, afterwards published in one volume as "Gluck's Leben und Schaffen"), which,

besides narrating the life of the composer, and supplying details that have been overlooked by Schmid, gives a minute analysis of almost all his works. It is marred, however, by undue hero-worship, and is scarcely critical enough to be considered final. A. Reissmann's "Christoph Willibald von Gluck, sein Leben und seine Werke" (Berlin and Leipzig, 1882), is an admirable and well-balanced work of history and criticism, thoroughly sound in every respect, as far as it goes. A good piece of patient research is that of the French antiquarian, M. Gustave Desnoiresterres, "Gluck et Piccinni, 1774-1800; La Musique Française au 18me siècle" (2nd ed. Paris, 1875), a work which has served as basis for Barbedette's "Gluck, sa Vie, son Système, et ses Œuvres" (Paris, 1882). Heinrich Welti's "Gluck," in Reclam's "Musiker-Biographien," is small but good.

A goodly number of works exist for a history of the opera up to and including the time of Gluck, such as the "Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution opérée dans la musique par M. le chevalier Gluck" (Paris, 1781), and Arteaga's "Le rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano dalla sua origine fine al presente" (2nd ed. Venice, 1785, 3 vols.), of which a translated and abridged form was published in London in 1802. Marcello's "Il Teatro alla moda" is of course indispensable, though, as a satire, it has to be read with caution; it is easily accessible in the French version of

M. Ernest David (Paris, Fischbacher, 1890). One of the most suggestive writers of the epoch was Algarotti, whose various essays on the arts were translated into German under the title of "Versuche über die Architectur, Mahlerey, und musicalische Opera" (Cassel, 1769).* Noverre's "Lettres sur la danse et sur les ballets" (Lyons, 1760), and Planelli's "Dell' Opera in musica" (Naples, 1772) are also useful.

For an accurate estimate of Gluck and the music of his time the general intellectual life of the eighteenth century has to be studied, especially in the works of those who wrote on music, such as Diderot, Rousseau, Grimm, Marmontel, Suard, La Harpe, Goldsmith, Harris, Du Bos, and others. Some of these men knew little of music in a practical sense, but they knew at least as much as Sonnenfels, whose "Briefe über die Wiener-schaubühne" are always quoted approvingly. For a general survey of the music of the time by a competent musician, Burney's various works are of course indispensable; while the general musical life of the eighteenth century is well illustrated in Vernon Lee's "Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy."

Berlioz' "A travers chants" contains some interesting articles on *Orfeo* and *Alceste*, and articles on Gluck are scattered about the *Revue des deux Mondes*, the *Revue Contemporaine*, and the *Revue Germanique*.

* English translations of his Essay on the Opera were published in 1767 and 1768.

Schuré's "Le drame musical" treats cursorily of Gluck and the opera, but the book is too *à priori* in its method to be of much value. Ludwig Nohl's "Gluck and Wagner, ueber die Entwicklung des Musikdramas" (Munich, 1870) is Wagnerian in feeling, while an anti-Wagnerian counterpoise is to be had in C. H. Bitter's "Die Reform der Oper durch Gluck, und R. Wagner's Kunstwerk der Zukunft" (Brunswick, 1884). This gives a good account of the opera previous to Gluck, with copious musical examples.

A few words remain to be added as to the general method and purport of the present volume. So far as the biographical portion of it is concerned, I have, of course, been entirely dependent upon the recognised authorities, whose united labours have covered the whole field exhaustively. In the critical portions I have attempted to sum up the measure of Gluck's achievement in relation to the intellectual life of his day. As the book is meant rather as a tentative contribution to culture-history from a side hitherto painfully neglected, than as a mere narration of a thrice-told tale, I have thought it well to dispense with the history, in detail, of the technical side of the opera. This can be had in many excellent works, and it were superfluous to devote another volume to the task. I have rather endeavoured to view the subject philosophically, and to bring the opera of the eighteenth century in general, and Gluck's work in particular, into line

with the whole intellectual tendencies of the time. Thus in the sketches in Part II. of the rise and development of the opera in Italy, France, and Germany, I have dealt only with such historical phases of it as fall within the province of culture-history. This seemed to me the more important and the more pressing work in view of the present condition of musical culture in England; while those who wish to supplement the account of the intellectual development of music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by an account of the formal development of the expressive side of music and of musical structure, will find this without difficulty in any of the numerous histories of the art.

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My grateful acknowledgments are due to my friend Mr. F. H. Woollett for his constant assistance and advice.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF GLUCK'S WORKS

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>‡ De profundis.</p> <p>1741 Artaserse.</p> <p>1742 Demofonte.
Demetrio (Cleonice).
Ipermnestra.</p> <p>1743 Siface.
Artamene.</p> <p>1744 Fedra.</p> <p>1745 Alessandro nell' Indie
(Il Re Poro).</p> <p>1746 La caduta de' Giganti.
Piramo e Tisbe.</p> <p>1747 Le nozze d' Ercole e
d'Ebe.</p> <p>1748 La Semiramide ricon-
osciuta.</p> <p>1749 Tetide.
Telemacco.</p> <p>1751 La Clemenza di Tito</p> <p>1754 Le Cinesi.
L'orfano della China.
Il trionfo di Camillo.
Antigono.</p> | <p>1755 La Danza.
L'innocenza giustifi-
cata.
Les amours cham-
pêtres.</p> <p>1756 Il Re Pastore.
Le Chinois poli en
France.
Le déguisement pas-
toral.</p> <p>1758 L'île de Merlin.
La fausse esclave</p> <p>1759 Cythère assiégée.
‡ L'arbre enchanté.</p> <p>1760 Tetide.
L'ivrogne corrigé.</p> <p>1761 Don Juan.
Le cadì dupé.
‡ Le diable à quatre.</p> <p>1761 Il trionfo de Clelia.</p> <p>1762 On ne s'avise jamais
de tout.
Orfeo.</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

xvi *Chronological List of Gluck's Works*

1763 Ezio.	1769 Bauci e Filemone.
1764 La rencontre impré- vue.	Aristeo.
1765 Il parnasso confuso. La corona.	? Klopstock's Oden und Lieder.
1767 Alceste.	? Hermannsschlacht.
1769 Paride ed Elena. Prologo delle Feste d'Apollò.	1774 Iphigénie en Aulide.
	1777 Armide.
	1779 Iphigénie en Tauride. Echo et Narcisse.

* * In the case of some of the early operas, of which it is impossible to learn the real year of the first performance, the above dates are merely approximative.

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GLUCK AND THE OPERA

INTRODUCTION

To make a plea in these days for the use of the comparative method in criticism would seem to be a work of supererogation. That method, so distinctive of our century in its purposes and results, has, through the labours of a number of men, raised the historical criticism of literature almost to the rank of a science. Apart from the question as to whether the comparative method covers the whole field of criticism ; apart, indeed, from the main question as to what the purpose and function of criticism really are ; it is indisputable that certain forms of literary criticism have, in our own day, attained to something like the certainty and the comprehensiveness of physical science ; and even in the minds of those who disclaim the method and deny its validity, there is an underlying conviction of its truth, and an unconscious application of its principles. While, however, the use of the historical method is thus at the present time practically universal in the criticism of literature and of art in general, there is one department which is as yet almost inno-

cent of scientific treatment ; we look in vain for any attempt to bring the criticism of music within the scope of method.

Up to a comparatively recent epoch it was, indeed, scarcely possible for the scientific criticism of music to make even a beginning. It is a truism to say that in any art or any literature the epoch of criticism must be of late evolution ; it implies, as the very conditions upon which it can exist, a fairly complete and multi-form body of data to go upon—data furnished by preceding epochs of great and varied creative activity. It is only within quite recent times that music has become important enough in itself, and sufficiently rich in the material it presents, to render possible a comprehensive and penetrating criticism of it. Thus it is not surprising that, until now, music has known no other criticism than that of personal taste, unaided by reflection and lacking in basic principles. Even yet we are, for all practical purposes, in the lowest stages of musical culture. The appreciation of music is almost universal ; reflection on it is the greatest rarity. In the criticism of literature and art we have attained to some measure of civilisation ; in our judgments on music we are for the most part still untutored barbarians. While in other departments we have progressed beyond the static conditions of previous ages to the dynamic criticism of art and letters, in the musical world we are yet centuries behind the time ; we are still with the scholiast, the commentator, the expositor, the pedagogue. Nothing is more disappointing to the general student of culture than the dead stop that is given him as soon as he reaches

music. He reads the culture-history of a given epoch, and learns not only what men thought and felt in those days, but why men so thought and so felt ; and when, after having surveyed the poetry, philosophy, social customs, art and literature of the epoch, he wishes to see what shape these ideas assumed in music, he finds his glass darkened. Not being, in all probability, a musician by training or in technical knowledge, it is impossible for him to get more than the barest idea of what the music of such an epoch was, and his culture suffers correspondingly ; for no help is afforded him by the works on musical history or biography he may consult. The complaint is common among liberal-minded men of letters that there is no rational criticism of music, considered as an expression of what men have thought and felt ; our criticism, such as it is, exerts itself for the most part on technical matters alone. This, of course, has its value, and perhaps a greater psychological value than its very exponents are aware of ; but it goes for comparatively little in a survey of human history. Out of the whole library of English writings on music it would be impossible to name ten works, to make an extremely liberal estimate, that could bear comparison for one moment with good contemporary literary criticism. Almost the only help the student gets is from the writings of scientists or philosophers who are treating of the arts, and who do indeed apply a scientific method to the phenomena of music. But from the very nature of the case the knowledge of these men cannot be extensive enough to cover the whole field of music ; so that the art finds itself in some such

dilemma as this : the men who can look at musical creations in the same way as at other products of the human mind—which is the indispensable basis of rational criticism—have not a sufficient knowledge of music at first hand to assist them in the application of the comparative method in anything more than a suggestive way ; while the men who have this knowledge, whose whole lives have been spent in the attainment of it, are quite devoid of any critical faculty, and ignore, with monotonous consistency, every opportunity for applying to their own art the methods that have alone given coherence to, and thrown light upon, the being and growth of other arts.*

Part of the general inefficiency of musical criticism is undoubtedly due to that peculiarity which music shares with none of the other arts ; the peculiarity that, owing to its greater indefiniteness of utterance, it has to seek a greater and more conventional definiteness of form. This depends upon a psychological necessity

* The imperfect musical culture of even eminent literary men in England is seen in Mr. John Morley's painfully inadequate treatment of music in his volumes on Rousseau and Diderot, and in his omission from his translation of *Le Neveu de Rameau* of "the technical points of the musical discussion," on the ground that these cannot interest now. On the other hand, the haphazard and inconclusive method of professed musical æstheticians is typified in Professor Knight, who in his "Philosophy of the Beautiful" not only omits any discussion of the late Edmund Gurney's brilliant book on "The Power of Sound"—the ablest of all works on music—but even fails to mention Gurney's name.

of our nature, by which we attempt to gather from certain structural devices the completeness and the symmetry that will bind the abstract musical tones into a consistent whole. Thus ever since the birth of modern music, composers have been unconsciously reaching out to certain structural forms with the object of getting the maximum of expression possible to music unaided by poetry.* These forms have gradually become crystallised and rigid, and their very excellence as modes of musical expression under certain conditions has led to their being regarded as unalterable laws which no future composer must disobey. Some such state of affairs as this has existed in every epoch in which an art has attained to great efficiency of expression. The Greeks of the Periclean age probably argued that the current form of drama was the one inherent in the nature of things, just as our modern pedants affirm that Beethoven has said the last word in the symphony, and that "all we can ask of those who follow him is not to come too far short of that inimitable model."† In the case not only of the symphony but of all other art-forms, there is as

* On the development of the sonata-structure, the reader may consult the excellent article of Dr. Hubert Parry in Grove's Dictionary. I may also refer to an article of my own on "Women and Music" in the *Free Review* for April 1895, in which the psychological meaning of the evolution of musical form is correlated with the general logical movement of the mind in other departments.

† See M. Arthur Coquard, "La musique en France depuis Rameau," p. 175.

yet apparently not the slightest perception of their relativity, and of the peculiar historical conditions under which each of them grew up. And unfortunately the evil does not end here. Not only have we to submit to the ignorance of pedantry in the literature of music, but the imperfect condition of our criticism reacts upon musical culture in general. Music has been at all times an art in which it was possible to produce a pleasing effect by mere imitation, and to the mistaken idea of the absolutism of certain musical forms we owe not only a vast quantity of third-rate music written in imitation of the masters, but the much more serious evil of a hindrance to our future development along more natural and more contemporary lines.

The method of procedure thus followed in the criticism of the more abstract forms of music may be taken as typical of the whole tenor of our criticism at present. It is perfectly futile to go on discussing the æsthetic of music *in abstracto*, without reference to the historical conditions under which the art has lived and by which it has been moulded from century to century. And it must be sorrowfully confessed that the loftiest musical genius of our own day has contributed more than any other man to darken our counsels and to lead us into the wrong path. An examination of his theoretical writings, had we the space to attempt it here, would furnish the most convincing proof of the inefficacy of any other method than the historical in the criticism and æsthetic of music. Wagner was typically German in his metaphysical bias and his *à priori* manner of treating history; and just as we

need hardly look to Germany to say the last word in philosophy or in sociology, we need not expect from it a scientific treatment of music—the most abstract of all forms of human expression, and therefore the one that lends itself most to bastard analysis and spurious generalisation. The method followed by Wagner in his æsthetic writings is typical of the labour that begins in assumption and ends in futility; and if we can further lay to his charge all that has been perpetrated by disciples such as M. Edouard Schuré, his guilt is heavy indeed.* The Wagnerian method is just that which has been proved time after time to be utterly inefficacious in all other fields of thought; it is the metaphysical method that first erects spurious entities, and then proceeds to deduce from these entities precisely what has already been put into them; in opposition to the genuinely scientific method that traces results to causes, and comprehends the whole sphere of human thought and action as a perpetually mobile system of interacting forces. The Wagnerian method is the counterpart of the method we are just beginning to surrender in history and sociology generally, whereby we used to discover the causes of

* I hasten to appease the anger of any Wagnerian who may feel aggrieved at this attack on the master's prose writings, by assuring him of my profound admiration for Wagner as a musician. I think it possible to demonstrate, however, that while his music at its best is unmatchable, a good three-fourths of his theoretical æsthetic is the merest Teutonic speculation, with no historical validity whatever, and simply holding the attention, as does the dialectic of Hegel, by its factitious air of symmetry and conclusiveness,

certain historical changes in the "national character" of this or that people, and endow abstract terms with the qualities of concrete forces, and generally explain everything most learnedly in terms of itself. In the Wagnerian dialectic we still have the metaphysical method in all its pristine glory and all its primitive irresponsibility. The problem for Wagner is, how to unite poetry and music in such a way as to procure the maximum of expression with the minimum of friction between the two specialised arts. To see most plainly the futility of any but the historical method in the treatment of such a problem as this, we have only to look at a parallel case in sociology. Copying the æsthetic formula, it may be said that the industrial problem of the present age is how to strike a balance between socialism and individualism, so as to maintain all the desirable advantages of each, and at the same time to increase the total sum of the efficiency of labour. We are not likely to come to any valuable conclusion on such a question as this by taking one entity called "individualism" and another called "socialism," and arguing downward from these to the concrete conditions of life, in the Hegelian style, painting a fancy picture of the mortal combat between these two principles throughout the ages, and their final reconciliation in some form that includes them both, as "unity in diversity." What we shall have to do is to take each country by itself to begin with, trace the historical and other conditions that have led to its present structure being precisely what it is, estimate the relative value of the various internal and external forces that shape its industrial constitution at

present, attempt to forecast the relative values of these forces in the immediate future, and then make our provisional alterations accordingly. Any other method than this may be interesting as an essay in the Hegelian manner, but is likely to throw very little light upon the past and still less upon the future.

It is practically the Hegelian method that Wagner and his disciples have followed. One entity is called "poetry," the other "music," and history, by a process of ingenious eclecticism, is re-written to suit the supposed gyrations of these two entities about a common centre. They begin by being united; then the earth-spirit, in the plenitude of his wisdom, sees fit to separate them for many a century, but solely with an eye to their ultimate reunion. You have your thesis, antithesis and reconciliation; and all you have to do is to take so much history as suits your purpose and quietly ignore the rest, reading, of course, your own preconceived meaning into everything. Ever since poetry and music became separated, thinks Wagner, each has been yearning in secret for the other; and though each has gone a-holidaying at times and come to mishap, still on the whole their paths have been gradually converging, and now, of course, have met. It is a curiosity of the metaphysical method that though it deals so manfully with the past, it seems to take little or no account of the future; it generally appears to imagine that after the threads have once been tied in a particular manner they will remain so tied to all eternity. But inefficient as the method is with regard to the future, it is not less so with regard to the past. There never has been such an

entity as "poetry," nor such an entity as "music," nor have these two been turning each an eye on the other throughout the ages. Art has not developed on any preconceived plan, nor has the evolution from form to form been according to the logical necessities of a dialectic. How painfully inadequate the metaphysical method is to explain the vicissitudes of music may be seen by any one who takes the trouble to compare the Wagnerian history of poetry and music with the actual history of those arts. To take Gluck or Rossini, for example, and treat them as stages in the evolution of a dialectical idea, is simply to ignore the actual social and æsthetic conditions that went to shape their music and their relations to poetry. To call the symphonic form "absolute" music, and to write of it as an inevitable stage in the development of music, is to ignore the peculiar conditions under which that form grew up and rose to such perfection. There has been no musical expression that has not owed its origin to the historical circumstances of the time. The internalism of the music of Bach, for instance, was mainly due to the shrinking-in of the German intellect after the political troubles of the seventeenth century, and its religious preoccupation with itself, thus generating in music a psychological state similar to that which underlay the contemporary mysticism in philosophy; while the later internalism of the symphonic forms, as I shall attempt to show, is due to the comparative exclusion of the composer from the outer world, the consequent atrophy of his dramatic sense, and his disposition to construct musical thought on purely inward lines. The climax of metaphysical

absurdity comes in the making of analogies between Gluck and Wagner on the basis of a supposed similarity between their methods of reform, unmindful of the fact that while Gluck and the eighteenth-century thinkers in general held that music should be wholly subordinate to poetry, and should strive to express not musical but *poetical* ideas, the practice of the nineteenth century, whatever its theories may occasionally be, is to subordinate poetry to music in any combination between them, and to use the poetry merely to supply the definiteness that is lacking in music.

Thus by the comparative method alone can we hope to understand the changes that have come over music since the end of the seventeenth century, and the varying attitudes it has assumed towards poetry. Everywhere we see that music has not developed along its own lines without reference to the other arts, but that these and the general culture of the times have helped to shape its course. The long controversy about aria and recitative would in all likelihood have never begun but for the fact that the time when the old polyphonic system was beginning to break up coincided with the reign of a purely derivative culture, that looked back to Greece for guidance in the arts, and that strove to model the new relations between poetry and music upon the antique. Thus began that system of declamation which, helped out by the desire to make music a mimetic art, and to make practice square with the precept of Aristotle, by the relatively low stage of development to which music had then attained in comparison with poetry, and by the general cast of thought of an age that was

essentially objective, in philosophy as in art, in science as in sociology, dominated the dramatic music of the eighteenth century, and has not been without influence on the music of the nineteenth. The very vehemence of Wagner's revolt against the florid Italian music of his early years could never have been, but for the political troubles of centuries previous, that crushed the native spirit of Italy, and made it impossible for her to envisage life with freedom and vigour and spontaneity of expression. Look where we will, we find an invariable correlation between the music and the general culture-conditions of any epoch.*

One other point bearing on this matter is suggested by the immediate subject of this book. I do not

* A curious evidence of this correlation may be had from the early Byzantine music. "At Constantinople . . . they were a dainty and fastidious people. Hair-splittings and niceties of thought and language absorbed their attention and engaged their partisanship. The mystery of the Trinity, the precise length of the Incarnation, etc., were debated and defined with the greatest acumen, and the subtlety of their thinking went through the other parts of life as well. Their art was mosaic painting, which consists in piecing innumerable little fragments of tiles together and making a picture out of them; their literary style was the style of exactitude and dainty choice of words; and in their music they delighted in hair-splitting scales, employing not only the chromatic and the enharmonic, but the Soft chromatic, which went by one-thirds of tones, and the Hemiolian chromatic, which went by three-fourths, turns, trills, and shakes innumerable, of which a whole literature survives." See Mr. J. F. Rowbotham's "History of Music," pp. 209, 210.

think that in all the many treatises on Gluck and the opera there is a single reference to that principle of the "imitation of nature" which played so large a part in the æsthetics, politics, morals, and sociology of the eighteenth century, and which really accounts for so many of Gluck's ideas and so much of his method of working. The nearest approach to the recognition of it is by Marx, who does indeed speak of those arias in which Gluck attempts to suggest the external aspects of nature (*Gleichniss-Arie*); but even in Marx it leads to nothing further; he does not even try to discover *why* Gluck held this opinion as to the imitative function of music. Yet the principle stares the student of the eighteenth century in the face at every turn. He can scarcely take up a book of the time without meeting it; in France he finds it in Du Bos, in Voltaire, in Rousseau, in Diderot, in Grimm, in D'Alembert, in Marmontel, in Suard, in Arnaud, in La Harpe, in Beaumarchais; in Italy in Algarotti; in England in Avison, in Harris, in Beattie. Nay, even if the importance and universality of the principle at that time might be missed by the musical historian, owing to his lack of culture beyond the department of music, it is inexplicable how it could have been passed over in the writings of Gluck himself. The famous preface to *Alceste*, round which so much discussion has centred, is absolutely nothing more than the application to the opera of principles that were universal in the thought of the time; just as the later romantic view of music is paralleled in the later German philosophical movement under Kant and Schelling and the æsthetic movement under Lessing and Herder. The real

meaning of Gluck's music and its relative importance in the history of the opera can only be estimated by a study of the culture-conditions in which he lived.

And if the comparative method has thus never been applied to one of the most striking of figures and one of the most obvious ideas in the history of music, it is futile to look for its application to the history of the art as a whole. One has only to compare any genuinely scientific history of nations with the usual histories of music to realise the great gulf that is set between them. In the treatment of music there seems to be little grasp on the part of the historian of the unity and totality of the conditions that go to shape the form and determine the utterance of art; if his work has any organic connection whatever it is on the side of the technical development alone. But that is not enough. What is really wanted is an explanation of how these various changes and developments in form were rendered possible. The earlier opera of the late Renaissance period, the French opera of Lully and Rameau, the opera of Gluck, the romantic opera of Weber, the modern opera of Wagner, the fugue, the sonata, the symphony, the song—all are directly explicable by reference to their surroundings. Some day a real history of music will have to be written; not an anatomical history, merely marking out the lines these forms have taken, but a physiological history, having reference both to structure and to function. Here, as in every other department of knowledge, it is synthesis that illuminates; it is the spectacle of one mental phenomenon bound up causally with another that widens knowledge and gives it

certainty and coherence. And when this physiological method of musical criticism comes, it will be found that no intellectual matter can surpass it in interest or value. Music is just as important a factor in the history of civilisation as poetry or philosophy; and to elucidate it by scientific criticism will be a service to culture as valuable as any other that can be rendered.

PART I

LIFE

CHAPTER I

1714-1746

As the Bach family seems to have had a hereditary predisposition to music, the hereditary strain of the family of the Glucks appears to have run in the direction of game-keeping and forestry in the service of princely houses ; for besides the musician's father and grandfather, two of his uncles were engaged in these occupations. The composer's grandfather, Johann Adam Gluck, the second son of one Melchior Gluck, was born in 1650 and died in 1722. He had nine children, one of whom, Alexander, married Anna Walburgis, and was the father of the musician, Christopher Willibald. Four sons and two daughters were afterwards added to the quiver of Alexander Gluck ; one of the sons, Anton, born in 1716, probably died young. The youngest of the daughters married a certain Klaudius Heller, a riding-master ; their daughter Marianne was subsequently adopted by her uncle, the composer, and usually accompanied him on

his various journeys, until the time of her premature death.

It seems to be settled conclusively that Christopher Willibald was born on the 2nd of July, 1714,* at Wiedenwang, in the Upper Palatinate. At this time his father was gun-bearer to Prince Eugene of Savoy. His father's life, however, was at all times unsettled. In 1717 he was at Neuschloss, in Northern Bohemia, in the service of Count Kaunitz; in 1722 he was master of the forest to Count Kinsky, at Kamnitz, and in 1724 he held a similar office with Prince Lobkowitz, at Eisenberg. He died at Reichstadt, in 1747, in the service of the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

The young Christopher accompanied his father on all these journeys. Alexander seems to have been a stern, hard-natured man, with little power of attraction for his children, who generally found their mother a much more sympathetic friend. In his later days of prosperity, Gluck used to relate how he and his brother Anton would accompany their father into the woods, bearing the implements of his craft for him, and undergoing much physical hardship; even in mid-winter they always went bareheaded and barefooted. Throughout their childhood, indeed, physical comfort seems to have been rare with them. It is no doubt to the rough life he led at this time that Gluck owed the

* It was formerly a matter of uncertainty whether Gluck first saw the light in 1700, 1712, 1714, or 1717, a certificate of baptism of a certain Christopher Gluck having led to some confusion, until it was discovered that this referred to an uncle of the composer. See Desnoires-terres, pp. 2-5.

vigorous constitution, the gross good health, and the stubbornness of temper that subsequently distinguished him, and that certainly influenced his intellectual creations. Whether, as imaginative biographers have loved to fancy, his boyish soul was all the while drinking deeply of the mysterious beauty of the woods, and receiving impressions that were ultimately to be reproduced in his music—as in the garden-scene in *Armida*—may reasonably be doubted. Against this pleasingly fanciful theory it must be remembered that a sentiment of the beauty of nature is rarely roused in those who are only brought into contact with her by the necessities of painful toil, and that in the garden of *Armida*, as Gluck depicts it, there is rather more of Versailles than of Bohemia.

After some little education at Eisenberg, the young Gluck was sent in his twelfth year to the Jesuit seminary at the neighbouring town of Kommotau, where he remained for six years (1726–1732). Here he learned to sing and to play the violin, 'cello, and organ. Although his father intended him to be a forester like himself, he was commendably bent on giving him as good an education as possible, and in 1732, probably being dissatisfied with the instruction his son was receiving at Kommotau, he sent him to Prague. Here the boy had his first experience of the sterner necessities of life. The parental purse was never too full, and with a large family dependent upon him, the poor forester had little to spare in the way of remittances to his son. Christopher found himself compelled to eke out his livelihood by giving lessons in singing, the violin, and the 'cello, and by playing

in the churches. At the Teinkirche, which was then under the control of Czernohorsky, a musician of some celebrity in his day, he was in receipt of a small monthly salary. This he managed to supplement by vacation-tours in the surrounding villages, where he charmed the rustic ear with waltzes and polkas, and was paid in eggs—the only available mode of payment for the villagers; and he exchanged the eggs for cash, if possible, at the first town he came to. These tours were not altogether valueless even from an artistic point of view, for he brought away with him many rustic melodies that afterwards did duty in his lighter operas. Later, he passed on to the towns, giving concerts there that brought him in rather more substantial returns than eggs. In 1736 he went to Vienna, where he was befriended in a very cordial manner by the princely house of Lobkowitz. His patron introduced him to the musical circles of the capital, and made him acquainted with the group of musicians that adorned the court of Charles VI. at that time—Caldara, Porsile, Fux, and the Conti. It was in this cultured circle that he met an enthusiastic amateur, Count Melzi, who, becoming attached to the promising young musician, engaged him in his own service and carried him off to Milan, where he placed him under the tuition of the celebrated Sammartini. Here Gluck remained four years, until 1741. The influence of the Italian master is said to be plainly discernible in Gluck's early operas, more especially in the prominence given to the string quartet, which was a characteristic of Sammartini's "symphonies." Whether he received from his master any profitable

instruction in counterpoint is a question difficult to decide. The whole bent of Gluck's essentially dramatic mind was opposed to any mere display of technical proficiency in the opera, and his one work in the contrapuntal style—the *De profundis*—is too inconclusive to prove much. Nor is it definitely known when the work was written; Marx is inclined to date it about the period of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, as it bears an occasional resemblance to parts of that opera.*

Gluck was now in his twenty-seventh year, and, fully confident of his own powers, he resolved to begin his career as an operatic composer. He chose for his subject the *Artaserse* of Metastasio, probably obtaining the commission for the work through the good offices of Count Melzi. He worked at the opera in a very independent way, without even taking Sammartini into his confidence. At the rehearsals, prophecies of the failure of the work were frequent; for although, like almost every operatic composer of the time, Gluck wrote as far as possible in the Italian manner, he had not entirely succeeded in veiling his northern origin, and the epithet *Tedesco*, at that time a very damaging one, was sarcastically applied to him and his work. According to the orthodox story, he inserted in the opera an aria of such grace and roundness of form that the connoisseurs at the rehearsals declared it to be superior to the rest of the music, and thought it the composition of Sammartini himself. When *Artaserse* came before the public, however, it turned out that the

* Marx, i. 25-30.

whole opera was a success with the exception of this one aria, that seemed utterly out of place.*

In the following year (1742) he produced, also at Milan, and with equal success, a new opera, *Demofoonte*, the libretto again being by Metastasio. This led to his receiving commissions from several theatres. In the same year two of his operas were produced at Venice—*Demetrio* at the San Samuele theatre, and *Ipermnestra* at the San Giovanni Crisostomo. *Demetrio* at first appeared under the title of *Gleonice*; in it sang the celebrated Felice Salimbeni, a pupil of Porpora.

In 1743 Cremona saw the production of *Artamene*, while *Siface* was produced at Milan. Thus in two or three years Gluck had composed no less than six operas. During the next two years he worked in a more leisurely way, giving *Fedra* to Milan, and *Alessandro nell' Indie*, produced under the title of *Il Re Poro*, to Turin. It is unfortunate that these earliest operas of Gluck have not come down to us in their entirety; they were never engraved, and some of the original scores perished in a fire. Gluck so frequently borrowed from his earlier operas that it would have been interesting to observe, as we are able to do in other cases, how he adapted his old ideas to his new requirements. The most successful portion of *Alessandro nell' Indie*, according to Marx,† was a ballet of Indian sailors.

The number of operas thus produced by Gluck—eight in five years—in a country swarming at the time with facile musicians, indicates the existence in his music of elements that appealed strongly to the

* Schmid, pp. 24, 25.

† Marx, i. 107.

popular taste. His fame was now extending over Europe, and in 1745 he received an invitation from Lord Middlesex, who controlled the opera in London at that time, to visit England and write a work for the Haymarket Theatre. Gluck accordingly set out from Turin with Prince Lobkowitz, passing through Paris on his way here. He came to London at an inopportune moment. Independently of the great vogue of Handel just then, which rendered it exceedingly difficult for any other composer to make headway, political troubles combined to disorganise the theatrical world; the Rebellion of 1745 had only just been put down.* Gluck's opera, *La Caduta de' Giganti*—having reference, in the custom of those days, to the Duke of Cumberland's recent victories—was produced on the 7th January, 1746, but was quite unsuccessful, and was withdrawn after only five performances. It was sung by Italians, and the dances seem to have won more applause than the vocal portions, on account of the imperfect rendering of the latter; the music itself does not appear to have been in any way above the ordinary Italian standard of the time, the airs being monotonous, forced, and overloaded with senseless ornament.† Handel is said to have expressed himself contemptuously of Gluck's attainments, in the well-known phrase that the latter

* See Burney: "Present State of Music in Germany," etc., 1773; i. 263.

† Marx, i. 110, 111. Burney gives a fair account of the opera, and adds: "Something might be expected from a young man able to produce this opera, imperfect as it was." ("History of Music," iv. 453.)

knew no more of counterpoint than Handel's cook. But an anecdote is told by Reichardt that seems to indicate rather more cordial relations between the two musicians. He says that Gluck, in despair at the bad reception of his opera, went to Handel for consolation and advice, bearing the score with him for the master's inspection. "You have taken too much trouble over your opera," said Handel; "that is quite out of place here. If you want to work for the English you must give them something tumultuous, like the rattle of drum-sticks on a drum."* Gluck is said to have so far profited by the advice as to have added trombones to his orchestra. And Reichardt's anecdote, as against the cook-story, is borne out by the gossipy Michael Kelly, who relates how Gluck, in the evening of his life, one day showed him the portrait of Handel hanging in his bedroom. "One morning, after I had been singing with him, he said, 'Follow me upstairs, sir, and I will introduce you to one whom, all my life, I have made my study and endeavoured to imitate.' I followed him into his bedroom, and opposite to the head of his bed saw a full-length picture of Handel, in a rich frame. 'There, sir,' said he, 'is the portrait of the inspired master of our art; when I open my eyes in the morning, I look upon him with reverential awe, and acknowledge him as such, and the highest praise is due to your country for having distinguished and cherished his gigantic genius.'†

* See Desnoiresterres, pp. 13, 14; and Reissmann, pp. 9, 10.

† "Reminiscences of Michael Kelly," 1826; i. 255.

The Giants having fallen, in a sense not anticipated by Gluck, he produced, on the 4th March 1746, his *Artamene*, written three years previously for Cremona, which met with more success and ran to ten performances. This, of course, was thoroughly in the popular Italian style.* One air in particular, *Rasserena il mesto ciglio*, which had been sung by the *castrato* Monticelli, had become immensely popular.† Many years afterwards Gluck charmed Burney by singing it to him. "I reminded M. Gluck of his air *Rasserena il mesto ciglio*, which was in such great favour in England so long ago as the year 1745; and prevailed upon him not only to sing that, but several others of his first and most favourite airs." ‡

Then came the incident out of which so much has been made by the historians of music. Gluck, the story runs, was invited to make a *pasticcio* out of the most popular airs of the operas he had already written, which, it was thought, would catch the popular taste. He did so; but the *pasticcio*, *Piramo Te isbe*, fell utterly flat. Then, according to the current theory, which probably owed its propagation in the first place

* See Marx, i. 108.

† Some indication may be had of the great success of the airs from this opera from the fact of their being published in 1746—a thing that rarely happened with the operatic music of that day. Six airs were printed—"The favorite songs in the Opera call'd *Artamene*, by Sgr. Gluck. London. Printed for J. Walsh." See Reissmann, pp. 9, 10.

‡ Burney: "Present State of Music in Germany," etc., i. 263.

to Suard, Gluck had his eyes miraculously and almost instantaneously opened to the true problem of the opera ; he saw " that all efficient music must be the peculiar expression of some situation ; that in spite of the splendour of the melody and the richness and originality of the harmony, this is its principal merit ; and that if this vital quality is lacking, the rest is only a vain arrangement of sounds, which may tickle the ear agreeably, but never move people deeply." The consequence of such a discovery led Gluck to subordinate music to the sincere interpretation of nature, and to prefer the smallest cry from the heart to the most ingenious and most learned combinations. So that it was to a failure that he owed this happy transformation in his ideas ; and far from feeling the least rancour towards his critics, he declared himself later to be indebted to the people of London."*

There does not seem much probability of ever getting at the truth of the matter. In spite of the plausible appearance of the story, we cannot place much reliance on it. Several facts tell against it, not the least significant being the number of operas in the Italian style written by Gluck between this date (1746) and the year 1762, in which the reform of the opera actually began with *Orfeo*. If Gluck could really have had his mind roused in this way to a sense of broader issues in music during his stay in London, he would hardly have needed sixteen years to elaborate so convincing and self-evident a principle. Besides, as Schmid has pointed out, he had already, during the

* Desnoiresterres, p. 16.

earliest years of his career in Milan, conceived the idea of making the music conform closely to the words.* According to the full version of the story, he was influenced by the music of Rameau, of Handel, and of Arne. Something in support of the theory might be based on Rameau, were it not that the objection already made holds good here also—that the length of time that elapsed between 1746 and 1762, and the quality of the works that occupied these years, are almost conclusive against the idea of new seed being sown in Gluck's mind at this particular juncture ; while there was little in Handel's operatic music, and still less in that of Arne, on which so essentially dramatic a genius as Gluck could base any operatic reform. Further, that he always held strong opinions as to the functions of dramatic music being something more than the mere giving of sensuous pleasure, is shown by his customary phrase on the usual "pathetic" airs of the Italian composers—"It is all very fine, *but it doesn't draw blood.*" Altogether, there seems to be little in the story that is of any real importance. Some colour has been lent to it, however, by a passage in Burney : " He told me that he owed entirely to England the study of nature in his dramatic compositions ; he went thither at a very disadvantageous period ; Handel was then so high in fame, that no one would willingly listen to any other than to his compositions. The rebellion broke out ; all foreigners were regarded as dangerous to the state, the opera-house was shut up by order of the Lord Chamberlain, and it was with

* See Marx, i. 112.

great difficulty and address that Lord Middlesex obtained permission to open it again, with a temporary and political performance, *La Caduta de' Giganti*. This Gluck worked upon with fear and trembling, not only on account of the few friends he had in England, but from an apprehension of riot and popular fury, at the opening of the theatre, in which none but foreigners and papistry were employed.

“ He then studied the English taste ; remarked particularly what the audience seemed most to feel ; and finding that plainness and simplicity had the greatest effect upon them, he has, ever since that time, endeavoured to write for the voice, more in the natural tones of the human affections and passions, than to flatter the lovers of deep science or difficult execution ; and it may be remarked that most of his airs in *Orfeo* are as plain and simple as English ballads.” *

But there is an air of insincerity about this also. Gluck merely says, in effect, that he wrote in London, as he had done in Italy, what he thought would please the public most ; and the compliment to the taste and discernment of the English audiences—which, only a generation previously, were enraptured with the farce of *Hydaspes* and the lion—was almost certainly a piece of heavy flattery for the worthy Burney, for Gluck was an adept in the art of managing men. The London spectators of that time were assuredly not the admirers of Spartan severity which he pretends

* Burney : “ Present State of Music in Germany,” etc., i. 264.

they were; it was decidedly not "plainness and simplicity that had the greatest effect upon them." And in his girding at the partisans of "deep science and difficult execution," and his profession of a desire to "write for the voice in the natural tones of the human affections and passions," he was probably on the one hand alluding to Handel and his hold over musical London, and on the other endeavouring to make light of his own lack of contrapuntal ability in favour of the forms of dramatic expression more peculiarly suited to him. The ingenuity of Burney in skipping at once from *La Caduta de' Giganti* to *Orfeo* in his effort to vindicate Gluck's new-found passion for simplicity, is a further indication that the story is untrustworthy. It may be noted, too, that Burney says nothing of *Piramo e Tisbe*, but makes the awakening of Gluck's mind follow upon the failure of *La Caduta de' Giganti*.

Rameau, of course, may have had and probably did have some influence on Gluck. When in Paris he had heard the French master's *Castor et Pollux*, and could not have failed to be struck by the dramatic power of the work, the well-defined dramatic rhythm, the clear declamation, and the usual French practice of subordinating the music to the words.

CHAPTER II

1746-1762

TOWARDS the end of 1746 Gluck left England to return to Germany, passing through Hamburg, a town then celebrated for its operatic performances, and where Handel himself had worked in days gone by. The opera, at the time Gluck visited Hamburg, was in the hands of a very competent Italian troupe, led by one Pietro Mingotti, whose wife figured as first soprano. Mingotti was in the habit of taking his company to Dresden for occasional performances, although an Italian troupe was already established there ; and it is an indication of the vogue of opera at that time, more especially of the Italian opera, that the Saxon capital should have been thus able to support two companies. Gluck is supposed to have received an appointment as Kapellmeister about this time, but in November 1746 he left Hamburg, probably feeling himself constrained and hindered in his work with Mingotti.

On June 13th, 1747, the marriage of Princess Anna, daughter of August III., with the Electoral Prince of Bavaria, took place in Dresden, and the usual festivities were necessary. On the day of the wedding an opera by Hasse, *Archidamia*, was performed ;

meanwhile Mingotti had had a libretto put together, which was handed to Gluck to be set to music. It was produced on the 29th June, on a newly erected stage in the Schlossgarten at Pillnitz, under the title of *Le Nozze d'Ercole e d'Ebe*. Nothing much need be said about the music, which seems to have been Italian in style throughout. The Jupiter was a tenor and the Hercules a soprano, but as there was no *castrato* available for the latter part it was taken with great success by Madame Mingotti. The performance resulted in her being engaged at the Hoftheater, as *prima donna*, at a salary of 2000 thalers.

About this time Gluck's father died, leaving him a small inheritance—an inn in Johnsdorf; this he sold, and then settled down in Vienna, early in 1748. The Austrian capital was henceforth his chief dwelling-place. Vienna had been for generations a music-loving city; the hedonistic tastes of the inhabitants had led to the firm establishment of Italian music there, and the Emperors had long fostered and protected it, retaining in their service the most celebrated composers and poets, such as Hasse and Metastasio. Here Gluck found the highest circles of art and letters opened to him. His fame as a composer had by this time spread over Europe; and not only his musical ability but his general intellectual powers made him a welcome and respected guest in any society of culture. He had not been long in Vienna before he was called upon to provide an opera for the festivities attending the celebration of the Empress's birthday, and working again on a poem of Metastasio, he produced *La Semiramide riconosciuta* on the 14th May, in the newly erected

Opera-house. The success of the work was complete, though it gave very few indications of the future reform of the opera. The characters, of course, are only court characters, and their sentiments only court-gossip.* The overture is the customary one in three movements, separated entirely from the opera itself. The middle section—*andante maestoso*—is marked by real feeling and earnestness, though its beauty is somewhat marred by monotony of rhythm.† Most of the airs belong to the *bravura* order, with long and prolix ritornelli ; even the fine dramatic air of Scytalco, *Voi, che le mie vicende*, is spoiled by trills and *fioriture*. One peculiar sign of the difference between the intellectual world of the composer in the eighteenth century and that of the composer in the nineteenth, is to be seen in the many attempts of Gluck and his contemporaries to treat a musical situation from the point of view of the plastic arts—to *describe* or *paint* a situation, by giving to the spectator's ear an impression somewhat similar to that given to the eye by a picture. Nothing shows more clearly than these attempts the really objective way in which the operatic composers of that time looked at music and the emotions ; and evidences of this kind, taken in conjunction with the evidence afforded by contemporary writing on æsthetics, cannot be neglected in any attempt to arrive at the real meaning of operatic forms in the last century or in this. In

* For a copious analysis of the Opera see Marx, i. 158-175.

† The *andante* is given at the end of the second volume of Marx, No. 8.

several airs of *La Semiramide riconosciuta* we find Gluck trying to imitate the external aspects of nature—the brook flowing calmly through the valley, or meeting with obstacles in its course, and so on.* This method of “painting” in music, as will be shown later, was a consequence of the general æsthetic ideas of the eighteenth century; in our own time, though it survives in an attenuated form in “programme-music,” the method is generally abandoned, as being essentially inartistic and opposed to the real nature of music as an art of inner imagination.

According to Marx, Gluck gives a foreshadowing of the future dramatist in the scene between Scytalco and Semiramis, which is distinctly above anything else in the work.†

In the course of his visits to Vienna, Gluck had become acquainted with and enamoured of Marianne Pergin, the daughter of a rich banker and merchant, Joseph Pergin; but though both the mother and the daughter were favourably inclined towards Gluck, the father, who seems to have been something of a Philistine, looked coldly on the suit, he not having a very high opinion of the financial resources of musicians. Finding it impossible to carry out his plans just then, Gluck departed from Vienna, obeying a call to Copen-

* For an interesting light on the eighteenth-century view of musical “imitation,” see Harris’s “Discourse on Music, Painting, and Poetry;” *Works*, vol. i. pp. 33–60 (edit. 1801). The “Discourse” was first published in 1744.

† The aria *Tradita, sprezzata*, to which he refers, is given as No. 9 at the end of his second volume.

hagen, where a Crown Prince (afterwards King Christian VII.) had been born on the 29th January 1749. Gluck was welcomed with open arms in the Danish capital, and lodged in the royal palace. On the 12th March he gave a "soirée musicale," and on the 9th April his "serenade" in two acts, *Tetide*, was represented at the Charlottenburg Theatre. The libretto seems to have attained the full degree of stupidity customary on these occasions, the chief object, of course, being to make plenty of references to the royal infant. There is neither overture nor symphony, the work being opened simply by an Introduction; according to Marx, the score contains passages of great power, the influence of Handel being evident. The "serenade" was very successful, and Gluck's excellent business sense made him seize the opportunity to give another concert for his own benefit on the 19th April. It was announced in the *Post-Rytter* of the 14th: "On Sunday, the 19th April, Herr Kapellmeister Gluck will give, in the Italian Theatre at Charlottenburg, a concert of vocal and instrumental music—a very brilliant and remarkable concert, worthy of great applause—in which he will perform, to the great pleasure of the audience, on a glass instrument hitherto unknown. Tickets may be had in the said Castle from the Kapellmeister himself."*

Towards the end of April, Gluck left Copenhagen

* See Desnoiresterres, p. 19, and Marx, i. 179. The "glass instrument" was the *verillon*. During his stay in London, Gluck had probably heard the performance of Puckeridge, an Irishman, upon it.

for Rome, travelling for some reason or other under the garb of a Capuchin; either, as is imagined, for economical reasons, or to avoid passport difficulties. At Rome he produced at the Argentina Theatre a new two-act opera, *Telemacco, ossia l'Isola di Circe*, which met with the greatest success both at Rome and at Naples. The score is preserved at Vienna; it shows Gluck to be really trying to shake off the yoke of the Italian opera; he aims at greater unity of handling, a truer dramatic expression in the airs, and a more continuous interest in the recitative; in one part he has nine numbers following each other in one dramatic sequence.* Probably the opera would have shown still further excellences had the libretto been more inspiring. Gluck thought a great deal of *Telemacco* in later years, judging from his employment of portions of it in his maturer works.†

In the beginning of 1750 the Philistine Pergin died, and Gluck returned to Vienna, where he espoused Marianne on the 15th September. This was for him the beginning of what seems to have been a wedded life of uninterrupted happiness. His wife, an accomplished and intellectual woman, accompanied him on most of his wanderings; she survived him several years and died in 1800. Almost immediately after their marriage the pair travelled to Naples, where Gluck had to produce his opera *La Clemenza di Tito*, the

* For an analysis of the opera see Marx, i. 189-202.

† Gluck's borrowings from his earlier works are detailed with German thoroughness by Bitter; see "Die Reform der Oper durch Gluck," pp. 231-243. He gives ten instances in which Gluck has used *Telemacco* in his later operas.

words of which were by Metastasio.* At Naples, Gluck signalled himself by a successful combat of obstinacy with the celebrated *castrato*, Caffarelli, who was at that time the idol and spoiled child of the Neapolitan public. The opera, like almost all the productions of Gluck's first period, was very successful.

Field-Marshal Prince Joseph Frederick of Saxe-Hildburghausen, a favourite of Maria Theresa, had been captivated by an air in *La Clemenza di Tito—Se mai senti spirarti sul volto*—and on Gluck's return to Vienna in 1751, he appointed him director of the concerts which were given every Friday in his palace of Rofrano. There Gluck wrote several works for him, and frequently led the violins in the concerts. Dittersdorf, the composer of *Doctor and Apothecary*, was also in the service of the Prince.

In 1754, the Prince was entertaining the Emperor and Empress and other members of the Imperial family at his château of Schlosshof, near the Hungarian frontier, and the usual musical performances were required in the festivities. Gluck was commissioned to set to music Metastasio's *Le Cinesi*, which was produced on the 24th September, the work being magnificently staged by Quaglio. It was intended as a prologue to a ballet, which bore the title of *L'Orfano della China*. The following winter it was given again in the Court Theatre, with Gabrielli in the chief part.

In July 1754, Count Jacob von Durazzo was

* Mozart set the same poem to music forty years later.

appointed by Maria Theresa to the post of Director of the Court Theatre. Durazzo, who was favourably inclined towards Gluck, made him Kapellmeister of the Opera at a salary of 2000 florins; and in this capacity he wrote a number of works for the Vienna Theatre. Towards the end of 1754 he was invited to Rome for the production of two operas, *Il Trionfo di Camillo* and *Antigono*. Both were successful, in spite of a cabal that was formed against him. He was further honoured by having the title of "Chevalier of the Golden Spur" bestowed upon him by the Pope—a title which henceforth was greatly affected by the composer. He was always very careful in the future to style himself "Ritter von Gluck."

In 1755 he set to music, for performance at the Imperial Château Laxenburg, a "Pastorale" of Metastasio, entitled *La Danza*, consisting of a Symphony in three parts, four airs, and one duet.* On the 8th December he produced another *pasticcio*, made up of selections from various works of Metastasio, under the title of *L'innocenza giustificata*, in one Act; it was repeated at the Court theatre in August of the next year. This work shows another step in advance in dramatic power, especially in the portions where the libretto affords him genuine dramatic moments. Although, however, in *Telemacco* he had abandoned the conventional symphony in three pieces in favour of an Introduction, he here makes a retrograde step to the symphony-form again. "Nevertheless, the symphony of *L'innocenza* indubitably bears, at least in the first

* Marx, i. 215.

and third sections, the signs of striving after character-indication ; and it is the first symphony of which this can be said. The poem has evidently seized upon Gluck, and roused in him an idea of the ancient Romans. He has not yet succeeded in making a plastic representation of them ; as yet we only see the bare thought of something warlike ; the music consequently only gives an impression of common formalism and of a colouring that aims at the representation of character." *

In 1756, for the celebration of the Emperor's birthday, he set to music a three-act opera of Metastasio, *Il Re Pastore*. Here again, as in *Telemacco*, there is no symphony ; the work begins with an "overture," which finishes in the dominant and leads immediately into the opening aria. Gluck, however, is not yet quite at home in the overture form ; though he uses two themes in contradistinction, the contrast between them is insufficient not merely for dramatic purposes, but even for pure musical treatment. And here, as elsewhere, he hovers between dramatic intensity and conventional weakness. He begins with a finely expressive air, but soon degenerates into mere bravura ornamentation ; and everywhere throughout the work good intentions are seen to go along with lack of power to realise them adequately.

In the autumn of 1760 the marriage of the Grand Duke Joseph (afterwards Emperor) with Isabella Bourbon, Duchess of Parma, took place, and the usual operatic festivities were required. Reutter, the first

* Marx, i. 222.

Kapellmeister, was passed over, and the commission for the new opera was given to Gluck. He wrote a "serenade," *Tetide* (his second work of that name), to words by Giannambrosio Migliavacca, which was produced on 10th October. The work is of little value. It commences with a fairly good three-section symphony, which here receives the name of overture.

The following year, 1761, saw the production of a ballet, *Don Juan, oder das steinerne Gastmahl* (*Don Giovanni, ossia il convitato di pietra*), the words being by Angiolini. It was successful, though it is unfortunate in challenging comparison with the opera of Mozart. Gluck afterwards utilised portions of it for *Armida* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

Some time previously the opera-house at Bologna had been burnt down, and a new one erected by Count Bevilacqua. To celebrate the opening of this, a work was demanded from Gluck's pen. He chose again a three-act opera by Metastasio, *Il trionfo di Clelia*, and went to Bologna to conduct it in person. He took with him Dittersdorf, who claimed to be a favourite in the great man's eyes, and who has left in his *Lebensbeschreibung*,* written by his son, a lively account of the journey. "One day Gluck told me that he had been invited to Bologna to compose an opera for that place. He asked me at the same time if I would care to go to Italy with him, but, it was to be understood, on the condition of my paying half the expenses of the journey and half of our daily expendi-

* Leipzig, 1801.

ture ; as to leave of absence, he undertook to procure that from Count Durazzo. 'Oh ! with infinite pleasure,' I answered, in the highest enthusiasm (a sentiment which a man like Gluck, who knew my love for art, as well as my circumstances, ought to have been able to appreciate above everything) ; 'but,' I added sadly, 'I have no money.' 'Then,' replied Gluck coldly, turning his back upon me, 'that is an end to the matter.'" However, Dittersdorf managed to find a generous patron to pay his expenses, and the time of their departure was fixed upon, when a request came from Signora Marini, a celebrated young Venetian singer, that she and her mother might be allowed to join the party. She had been singing in Prague for two years, and was now anxious to return to Italy ; and Gluck being willing, the four set off together.* They passed through Venice, and Gluck and Dittersdorf reached Bologna during Easter week. There Gluck made the acquaintance of Farinelli, the singer, and of the celebrated Padre Martini. He found the Bolognese orchestra very incompetent in comparison with those he had been accustomed to at Vienna, and his new opera had to go through seventeen complete rehearsals before he was sufficiently satisfied with the rendering to venture on a public performance. The opera was successful, however, though it has little interest or value for the modern student. After the third performance Gluck and Dittersdorf made preparations for departure on a tour of pleasure, that was to include Venice, Milan,

* See Desnoiresterres, 32-34.

Florence and other cities. At this juncture, however, they received a summons from Durazzo to return immediately to Vienna for the approaching coronation of Joseph II. They accordingly made their way back through Parma, Mantua and Trent, only to find on reaching Vienna that the coronation had been postponed to the following year.

For some time previously Count Durazzo, in his capacity of director, had been negotiating for the performance at Vienna of select specimens of the French light opera. This was a species of composition in high favour in Paris at this time, the music being usually by Duni and Monsigny, while Favart supplied the texts that were most sought after. In December 1759, Durazzo had written to him: "When M. Favart writes a comic opera for Paris, there is nothing to hinder his sending it to Vienna. Count Durazzo will have it set to music by the Chevalier Gluck or other able composers, who will be delighted to work on such agreeable verses. The poet and musician will thus extend their reputations by mutual assistance, and will doubly profit by working one for the other; and M. Favart will obtain new music without expense." Gluck had already written several works of this order—*La fausse esclave* (1758), *L'arbre enchanté* (1759), *L'ivrogne corrigé* (1760), *Le cadî dupé* (1761), and *Le diable à quatre* (1761); while to six others—*Les amours champêtres* (1755), *Le Chinois poli en France*, *Le déguisement pastoral* (1756), *L'île de Merlin* (1758), *Cythère assiégée* (1759), and *On ne s'avise jamais de tout* (1762)—he at various times added *airs nouveaux*. Some of these

were sent by Durazzo to Favart, to enable the latter to obtain an idea of what was required for a Viennese audience. Favart replied : "It seems to me that M. le Chevalier Gluck has a perfect understanding of this kind of composition. I have examined and had performed for me the two light operas *Cythère assiégée* and *L'île de Merlin* ; I find they leave nothing to be desired in point of expression, taste and harmony, and even with regard to the French prosody. It would flatter me to have M. Gluck exercise his talent upon my works ; I would be indebted to him for their success."* It has to be said that Favart had previously forwarded to Durazzo several scores of Duni and Monsigny, and it is probable that Gluck, with his customary faculty of adapting himself to any circumstances, had modelled his light-opera style on that of the French composers.†

The French light-opera seems to have been almost as popular in Vienna as in Paris ; in the latter city it was looked upon as an agreeable refuge from the "psalmody" of the old opera of Lully and his successors. Gluck's style, as already stated, was modelled upon that of Paris, and it is astonishing with what ease he reproduces their characteristic ideas, turns of melody, and modes of working. It is one more illustration of the difficulties of criticism in dealing with an age of

* Desnoiresterres, p. 28. Favart's letter is dated 24 Jan. 1760.

† Fétis ("Biog. univ. des Mus." ; art. "Gluck"), mentions another comic opera by Gluck, *Le chasseur en défaut*. Neither Marx nor Schmid knows anything of this work, and Marx supposes Fétis to have met with it in the Library at Paris. See Marx, i. 259, note.

artistic imitation like the eighteenth century, where in many cases the traces of the individual handling are almost as nothing compared with the incessant sinking of the artist's personality to comply with the fashionable demands of the time.

To many who must have been weary of the conventionality and inanity of the current Italian opera, of impossible and uninteresting Greek and Roman personages, all cut to the same unvarying pattern, these comic operas may have been an intellectual relief, and a symbol, however faint and imperfect, of a life that was at all events, in spite of its own theatrical formalism, nearer to them than that of Rome or Athens or Bagdad. There is a freshness about some of these works that brings a little warmth to the student's breast after much groping among the dry and dusty stupidities of eighteenth-century Italian opera. They stand nearer to the possibilities of genuine dramatic development than the conventional opera according to Metastasio and the courts; just as at the time of the Renaissance, as, indeed, before and after it, there were more possibilities of dramatic development in the songs of the people than in the futile antiquarianism and scholarly exclusiveness of the seekers after "the music of the ancient Greeks." The very titles and themes of the comic operas of the eighteenth century are indicative of a frame of mind, on the part of artist and of audience, more clearly bearing on the actual life of the day than the hollow stage-imitations of antiquity that made up the average *opera seria*. *L'arbre enchanté*, for instance, is a fairly amusing story, based on a well-known tale of Boccaccio

("Decameron," 7th Day, 9th Novel); while *La rencontre imprévue*,* by Dancourt, is taken from a farce of Le Sage, the subject being similar to that of Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Serail*. In each of these works some opportunity is given to the composer really to delineate character, and Gluck's treatment of the old man Thomas in the first-named opera is decidedly humorous. And insignificant as they may appear to our eyes, these works in all probability played no unimportant part in the development of Gluck's genius. For Gluck was at heart no mere imitator of a supposed antiquity; frequently as he blunders in æsthetic theory, like so many of his contemporaries, through a too-conscious reaching back to the past, his own really great work is most characteristic of his epoch, of its thoughts, its emotions, and its life. That he constantly read a wrong meaning into his own artistic meditations and intentions is not a characteristic of him alone; in our own century Wagner has frequently worked rightly and reasoned wrongly, arguing, like Gluck, from premisses that, if worked out logically, would negate the value of his own work. And in spite of Gluck's aspirations after antiquity, he was unconsciously performing a much greater service than that of reproducing "the music of the Greeks"; he was expressing for us the thought of his own day. To do this adequately, to express himself and the men he lived among as they really were, it was necessary that he should break loose

* For a consideration of these two works, see Marx, i. 260-279.

from the conventionalities, the slothful spirit of imitation, that were this curse of the operatic music of that time ; and in this effort after greater intellectual freedom, his essays in musical comedy were not without importance. That he took much trouble over them is undeniable. The old man in *L'arbre enchanté* is a genuine creation of humour, and the orchestration is at times very fine. Though the opera commences with the usual "symphony" in three portions, Gluck is really endeavouring to make it bear upon the subject of the coming play, and he employs the oboe very effectively to give a rustic colouring to it. "What is of greater importance is the fact that Gluck enters into this new field quite conformably to his real character. Wherever he finds the least support, he attains to dramatic truth and characterisation ; where this support is not to be had, he writes music in the sense and according to the taste of his time ; so that a thoughtful reader who knew nothing of Gluck's future would feel the question urged upon him—what will this lead to, if ever he gets a really dramatic foundation ? It is noteworthy, too, that what we have called in the abstract 'music' (not music *) in antithesis to the dramatic moments, has always the colouring of the rustic melody to which it is linked ; this abstract music is in the Italian style in the Italian opera, and in the French operettas, so far as we know, quite French ; no one would take Lubin's ariettas—for example, the first one, *Près de l'objet*—for Italian music.

* This is a subtle German distinction which, I am afraid, none but compatriots can appreciate.

“When we look more closely, however, at *L'arbre enchanté*, we see that even in such a trifle as this, Gluck's originality is undeniable. In the Italian comic opera—for example, Piccinni's *La buona figliuola*, the compositions of Galuppi in this *genre*, the later works of Cimarosa and Paisiello—the main object is to write easy and pleasant melodies with an appropriate accompaniment; the comic man, the buffo, must delight the audience with endless cascades of chatter; the French have almost the same bent in their vaudevilles and operettas, except that they make the music much less exuberant and bring it nearer to their popular songs—these latter being more witty and pointed than characteristic or emotional. In Gluck, the effort after definite characterisation is undeniable.”*

La rencontre imprévue seems also to have been very popular in its time. In it occurs the air, *Unser dummer Pöbel meint, dass wir strengen leben* (*Les hommes pieusement pour Catons nous prennent*), upon which Mozart afterwards wrote a set of variations. The opera was reproduced at Vienna in 1807, but by that time a great change had come over the public taste, and it fell rather flat.

* Marx, i. 269.

CHAPTER III

1762-1769

GLUCK was now in his forty-eighth year, and in full vigour of body and mind. His residence in Vienna and his constant association with men of genius and culture were now beginning to bear fruit. We know, besides, that during the ten years from 1750 to 1760 he had been an assiduous student of literature and art, and his virile intellect was now commencing to bear more strongly and more consciously upon æsthetic questions, and in particular upon the question of the natures of poetry and music and their combination in opera. It is inconceivable that he should not have been struck from the earliest years of his career with the complete fatuity of the current Italian opera, though he might well feel himself powerless to do anything to alter the existing condition of things. His early necessity of earning his bread and making his way in the world, as well as the later necessity of ministering in the accustomed way to the musical pleasures of the Court to which he was attached, would make it impossible for him to step far out of the common circle of conventionality. No estimate can be too great of the deadly evil done to music in the eighteenth century by the system of patronage in

courts and noble houses ; it is one of the points in the history of music that has not yet had a tithe of the consideration it deserves. A truly scientific criticism would investigate the system of patronage in its inevitable effects upon the composer's nature, and its equally inevitable effects upon his art ; when we examine the character of the pacific and timorous Haydn, for instance, and reflect how much of this was due to long-continued subservience to the wishes and habits of his patrons, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that much of the out-of-the-world repose that pervades his music is the expression of a spirit almost emasculated by undue seclusion from the active life of men—a spirit of weak complaisance and unambitious compromise, turned away from the outer world to the inner, rarely venturing to touch upon a phase of life of which, indeed, it was almost wholly ignorant.

In the eighteenth century it was a matter of the greatest difficulty for the musician to see the world as it shaped itself to other men, by reason of his having to look at it from the salon of his patron. The musician was in many cases less a man than a human song-bird. Thus a true historical study of the development of musical form would have to take account of the influence upon the musician's art of his dependence upon kingly or princely patronage. It was partly by reason of this that pure instrumental music attained to such extraordinary perfection in the last century. A musician like Haydn was of necessity shut up with himself to a very large extent, and the inevitable consequence was a development of *absolute* musical forms, that bore little relation to the moving

life of men, rather than of the forms of dramatic music ; and in spite of Gluck's reform, it is quite possible that opera as an independent growth would have languished in Europe in another quarter of a century—would have merely escaped the Scylla of Italian absurdity or the “imitation of antiquity” to have fallen into the Charybdis of the absolute forms of instrumental music—had it not been for the Revolution and the new Romantic movement. There are not wanting signs of this danger threatening dramatic music from the side of pure instrumental music in the later work of Gluck himself. In every department except that of farcical comedy—placing Gluck's six great operas on one side—the musical imagination was distinctly below the imagination of other men of that day. Compare the relation between poetical comedy and musical comedy in *Die Meistersinger*, or in any of the Gilbert-Sullivan operas, or in any one of Auber's best works, where they stand on the same plane, with the relation between the verbal comedy of Beaumarchais in *Figaro* and Mozart's musical comedy in his setting of that play, and it will be realised how far below contemporary thought the best eighteenth-century music was, with the exception of that of Gluck. Mozart's *Figaro*, of course, is a work of immortal beauty, but the significant point is that this beauty is far more akin to the symphonic work and the chamber-music of the time than to the drama it professes to illustrate. All that is interesting to the student of eighteenth-century manners in the comedy of Beaumarchais vanishes in this setting of it by Mozart. This interest is replaced by another, that of absolute esoteric musical

enjoyment. Not only the characters but the world they live in is changed. Everything takes an artificial and conventional air ; the opera itself, intellectually almost ridiculous, lives in our minds, not, like the comedy of Beaumarchais, as a picture of eighteenth-century life, but as a piece of pure impersonal music. It is the world, not of Beaumarchais' Paris but of Haydn's salon.

One more fact may be noted, as being related both as cause and effect to this exclusiveness of music ; the fact that the musician was generally held in small esteem in the eighteenth century, just as the actor was despised in the sixteenth century in England. The musician had very little actual relation to the world ; his main concern was with his employer or his patron. He produced his works, not through the stress of humanistic feeling urging him to express the thoughts within him—in cases like those of Haydn and Mozart, this feeling practically did not exist—but in obedience to the wishes of his employer or the necessities of some theatrical performance. Piccinni, for instance, to take one of the best specimens of the class to which he belonged, was perfectly willing and perfectly able to turn out operas in abundance for any occasion that might arise, adapting the style of them to the conventional models for each kind of composition—for a royal wedding or coronation, for a pleasure party at a noble house, and so forth ; but on scarcely a single occasion would he feel compelled to utter himself in music through any burning, imperative need within him. And so we find him hustled about from one court or one patron to another, never regarded as

a man or a thinker, but as a mere machine to grind forth music when it was required of him. Could there be produced, under such circumstances as these, music that should be of any permanent value, music that would survive after its own immediate day had closed? Deprive the artist of his independence, his individuality, his very essence as a man, distinct from his capacity as servant to a court or a prince or any system of convention, and you take away from his art all bearing upon the life and thought of the world. He may still produce art, but it will be for the most part simply art for the chamber or the church, not art that can stir men, not art that can give them new impulses and new lights on life. The opera of the eighteenth century was undignified, and paltry, and servile, because the men who wrote it were undignified, and paltry, and servile. Social conditions in which the artist is regarded as a mere means of ministering to the enjoyment of the ignorant and selfish wealthy, must inevitably result in the degradation of himself and the emasculation of his art.

It was under such conditions as these that Gluck passed his years of apprenticeship; from the very beginning he found himself in that dignity-destroying atmosphere of patronage. The son of a poor forester, dependent from his earliest years upon himself for support, forced to receive his musical education through the charity of princes and noblemen, introduced into their houses as an object of their protection, where a thousand silent influences would be constantly at work to sink his soul in nerveless acquiescence in the spiritless course of things around him—a system

of patronage on the one side and of dependency upon the other ; then finding employment in writing for Italian theatres where everything original had to be sacrificed to the dominant taste for slothful conventions, where the musician's sole function was that of an embroiderer, to adorn weak and foolish libretti with figures and colours all of one invariable kind ; then attached to the Imperial court, the petted protégé of the emperors, where again, as in the houses of his princely patrons, every original conception must be stifled in embryo, where deep thought and true imagination and serious feeling were hampered and vitiated by the one great necessity of doing nothing to offend the ears of his noble protectors, of putting nothing in his compositions that would be above their small capacity ; the wonder is how he managed to do good work in spite of all. Nothing can be said in greater praise of Gluck than that he lived through these conditions and outgrew them. Nothing is more conclusive of his claim to honour than the way in which, by virtue of his strong physical and mental organisation and his genuine humanism of feeling, he set himself with iron will to express *himself* in his music, and in the teeth of all the opposition of foolishness, and conventionality, and sham, to make his music manly, truthful and sincere. This firmness of will and purpose, often amounting to dogged obstinacy, led him frequently to the commission of injustices and to a harshness of attitude towards other men ; but we can pardon this and more in him. To do the magnificent and courageous work he did, he required a strength of nature that perhaps necessarily led him

into an attitude of uncompromising roughness towards other and weaker men. But without this dogged self-sufficiency of character he would never, in the age in which he had the misfortune to live, have been at all equal to the reformation of the opera. During all these years of servitude and imitation he must have frequently realised with shame and self-contempt that he was pandering to meanness of spirit and unintelligence of soul. He himself is reported to have said that he had wasted thirty years of his life in imitating Jomelli and Pergolesi. Critics have tried to compromise the matter by saying that these thirty years were not wholly wasted ; that they had given ease and facility to his imagination, and so prepared the ground for his later reforms ; as if any ease and facility that came of servile and unintelligent imitation of an art that was itself divorced from the deeper meanings of men's lives, could be of any value to a man of native strength of soul ; as if thirty years of a strong artist's life spent in mean and pitiful pandering to the desires of men who had no part in the thoughts and movements of actual life, could be anything less than thirty years taken from the study of men as they actually were outside the salon or the opera-house ; as if the musician who could create real and breathing men and women could be anything else but weakened and degraded by thirty years' association with the nerveless dolls and bloodless puppets of Metastasio and the Viennese and Italian theatres. The ease and facility that Gluck gained from the Italian style, if indeed he gained any, could have been acquired in something less than thirty years. But that after such a length of

time his soul and spirit should not have become as emasculate as those of his contemporaries, that after this time he should still have strength of mind and force of will enough to bring his music to bear upon the expression of what men really felt and thought—this it is that makes him so magnificent and so statuesque a figure. He dwarfs the Piccinnis and all around him; the same generic name is hardly applicable to them both.

Of late years Gluck had been earnestly studying ancient and modern literature, and the thoughts within him were slowly ripening to fruit and flower. He could not have failed to be struck years earlier by the inanity of the Italian stage. Others beside him in the eighteenth century had turned away in disgust from its weaknesses and its lack of human interest. "How is it the Italians have not a good serious opera?" asks Grétry; "for during the nine or ten years I have lived in Rome I never saw one succeed. When anybody went there it was to hear this or that singer; but when the latter was no longer on the stage, everyone retired into his box to play cards and eat ices, while the pit yawned."* The Président de Brosses had said the same thing about the time Gluck was maturing his plans for the reformation of the opera; once in the Della Valle Theatre, he says, he found chess an excellent pastime "for filling the void in these long recitatives," and music equally excellent "for interrupting one's too great passion for chess."†

* "Mémoires et Essais sur la Musique," i. 114.

† "La Président de Brosses en Italie," ii. 357, 358.
Quoted in Desnoiresterres, p. 48.

Forty years before, Marcello had satirised the inanities of the Italian stage in his celebrated "Il Teatro alla moda;" while Addison in England and Algarotti in Italy, besides a number of other writers, had called attention to the great degradation into which the opera had fallen.

Thus Gluck by no means stood alone in his perception of the crying need for reform in the Italian opera. His crowning merit is not that perception, but the realisation of it in work, the translating it into actual reform. A thousand weary and sated hearers of the opera might see the foolishness and the hollowness of it all; Gluck alone could create something better to take its place. Already in some of his works he had shown flashes of that rich creative energy that was at the foundation of his nature. In *Semiramide*, *Telemacco*, and elsewhere, he had given proofs of a strong dramatic capacity, waiting only for a favourable opportunity for the employment of it. Naturally the first requisite was a reform in the verbal groundwork of the opera. Nothing could be done with the ordinary libretto, with its sham personages, its conventional airs and situations, its rigidity of structure, and its wearisome reiteration of words destitute of the barest dramatic or even intellectual signification. Gluck believed himself to have chosen rightly when he fixed upon Raniero di Calzabigi to be his coadjutor in the reform of the opera. Calzabigi was an Imperial Councillor who had already earned some reputation in Europe as a critic and a man of taste; at Paris he had edited an edition of Dante, to which he had written an introduction. Gluck apparently had

found in his conversation evidences of culture and understanding, and had settled upon him as the man most fitted to work with him in his new project. The result of their collaboration was the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*. It is not known precisely what was Gluck's share in the composition of the libretto, though it was certain to be a large one. Probably we shall not be far wrong in saying, with Marx, that he would insist on the sense and dramatic interest of the recitative, on the lyrical portions being really lyrical, and not the conventional "arie" of Metastasio, and on the importance of the work to be given to the chorus. In this last connection, he would in all likelihood have in his mind a vivid image of the choruses of Rameau, which he had heard in Paris, and of those of Traetta, whose *Iphigenia*, containing a fine chorus of Furies,* had been performed at Vienna in 1760.

The new work was produced on the 5th October 1762. The ballet was arranged by Angiolini; the machinist was Quaglio. The part of Orpheus was given to Guadagni, a *castrato* who stands out in refreshing contrast to his fellows of that age by being the possessor of two qualities not usually found among them—intelligence and modesty. He entered into the spirit of Gluck's work with perfect comprehension, and refrained from defacing the music allotted to him with any of the customary "embellishments," the employment of which, due in the first instance to the vanity and vulgarity of the singers, had been so long consecrated by custom. Gluck's exacting spirit showed itself at

* See Bitter, pp. 164-177.

the rehearsals. More than once he came into conflict with the instrumentalists, to appease whom the Emperor's personal influence had to be exerted: "You know, my children, what he is! But he is a worthy man at bottom." Calzabigi himself had taken in hand the training of the singers in the action and expression necessary to the realisation of his play. The first performance naturally created astonishment and some opposition, but these gradually declined, until at the fifth rendering the position of the new work was assured. It passed out of Germany into Italy, and "at Parma itself, Traetta, one of the greatest masters of that time, certainly the most pathetic and the most 'German' of Italian composers, was unable to have his *Armida* performed; the public wished only to hear *Orfeo*."*

Much as Gluck wished to emancipate himself from the traditional conventionalities of the opera of this day, he was bound by these conventionalities in his choice of a subject. It was the almost universal custom to take the stories for grand opera from "classical" life, and it is from this ancient world that Gluck drew his subject; a pre-historic sun-myth was to serve as groundwork for the reformation of the opera.

He has given up the old "symphony" form of introduction; he begins the opera with an overture, which is, however, disappointing and inconclusive both from the dramatic and from the musical standpoint; from the former, because the great defect of construction of the poem of *Orfeo* is its absence of any strongly

* Desnoiresterres, p. 51.

marked dualism of subject, which leaves the composer without the opportunity of employing two forcibly contrasted themes ; and from the latter, because it has not sufficient strength or beauty or interest to be pleasing in itself, purely as a piece of music, apart from any dramatic associations. It might have been written by Gluck in his apprentice days, when he was under the tuition of Sammartini, traces of whose influence are clearly discernible in it. Broadly speaking, he may be said to be aiming tentatively at duo-thematic treatment, but his themes are neither interesting in themselves, nor sufficiently strong in contrast to produce dramatic effect. The overture, in fact, is perfectly supererogatory ; the opera would not be appreciably affected if it were removed altogether. How inconclusive and unnecessary it is, becomes strikingly evident on hearing the *real* introduction to the drama—the short orchestral prelude that precedes the opening chorus of the First Act. The stage shows an open plain with the tomb of Eurydice ; round it are moving the shepherds and girls, bearing flowers and twigs of myrtle, and singing a chorus of mourning. Here the orchestral introduction breaks away from the characterless spirit of the overture ; here the pervading spirit is unmistakably dramatic at every point. The chorus take up the same broad, sad theme, and for a moment the voice of Orpheus blends with theirs in the cry “ Eurydice ! ” twice repeated as the mournful song continues ; and a peculiarly poignant effect is created at the third utterance of the name by the singer’s voice taking a tone higher than on the two previous occasions, and by its standing out against a

moving background of chords of diminished intervals, instead of blending, as before, with the chord of the minor third of the dominant. Thus in the first few moments of the opera, Gluck had shown his extraordinary faculty for realising the most striking dramatic effect by the most simple and most natural means.

The chorus conclude their sorrowful appeal to Eurydice to return, and Orpheus addresses them in a recitative, "Enough, my companions! your grief increases mine. Strew flowers about the marble tomb, and leave me; here will I remain, alone with my sorrow." They make silent processions round the tomb, crowning it with flowers, while the orchestra gives out solemn music; then they break again into the first chorus, to the strains of which they make their exit, leaving Orpheus alone. In a short but extremely beautiful air he calls upon Eurydice to return to him. The air is more in the voluptuous Italian fashion than are the later arias we are accustomed to associate with the idea of Gluck, but is not without dramatic significance, more especially on the words, "Vain is my lament! my beloved one answers not!" Three times during the course of the aria an echo of the theme is heard from a small orchestra behind the scenes. The most serious flaw in the aria is the constant alternation of *piano* and *forte*, almost chord by chord; it is at once unnecessary and undramatic, and by forcing the expression tends to render the aria insignificant. This is one of those instances of Gluck's employment of the usual trickery and frippery of his contemporaries, which show how hard it was for him

to break completely away from the conventional style. The following recitative, "Eurydice ! Eurydice ! dear shade, where art thou ?" is of the "accompanied" order, and more dramatic. Not only is the expression sought most carefully and patiently in the vocal part, but the orchestra is given its share in producing the general effect. Then Orpheus repeats his aria to slightly different words. A third time he sings it, and a third time breaks into recitative, this time of a more passionate character, and in parts almost lyrical. He has just declared his resolve to descend into the under-world and win back Eurydice, when Cupid appears, tells him that he has the sympathy of the gods, and that Jupiter pities him ; and advises him to descend to the kingdom of the shades, where by the magic of his harp he may win back his wife. Short as this piece of recitative is—only fifteen bars—it exemplifies the studied way in which Gluck was now handling the implements of his craft. Where the least significance is given in the words, over and above their mere ordinary indicative quality, he attempts to illustrate their meaning through the orchestra, as on the words, "Lethe's dreadful strand," where a suggestion of the gloom of the river is given in the accompaniment.

The following recitative, in which Cupid tells him the conditions on which he will be allowed to bring Eurydice from the underworld—that he is not to look upon her face until they have come into the light of day again—is dry, unlyrical, and uninteresting. "Think over it," says Cupid ; "Farewell !" Before making his departure, however, he sings an aria, which

affords an interesting illustration of the eighteenth-century method of "painting" in music; where the sense of the words changes, a complete change is made in the material characteristics of the music. Thus the first part of the aria, depicting the happiness of the man who bows patiently to the will of the gods, is a rather broad melody in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, in the key of G, *sostenuto*; in the second part, Cupid tells Orpheus of the joys that await him, and to paint this Gluck converts the *sostenuto* into an *andante* (*piano*), changes from the former key to that of D and from the $\frac{3}{4}$ time into a very tripping $\frac{3}{8}$ time, made even more dactylic in character by the strong accent on the first note of each phrase, and prefixes to almost every bar an ornamental triplet figure; the purpose of all this being to convey through the ear a *picture* of the joys that are spoken of in the words. This change from one theme to another takes place five times, the same theme being always used to accompany the same words. That occasional imperfection of the lyrical sense also that is noticeable in Gluck betrays itself here. There is a peculiar awkwardness about the conclusion of the second theme; by setting the words to this $\frac{3}{8}$ time he finds himself, at the end of them, just one step off the tonic conclusion of his theme, considered as a musical phrase. The consequence is, that he has to conclude a symmetrical sweep of four bars with another bar that seems to need still another to balance it; and the effect of this make-weight conclusion is inexpressibly awkward; it suggests the pedestrian difficulties of an animal encumbered with an extra and superfluous leg.

Cupid retires, and Orpheus debates within himself, in a recitative that is both dramatic in intention—the intervals between the notes being greater than in any of the previous recitatives—and accompanied in a descriptive way by the orchestra, which also concludes the act.

The Second Act shows the under-world ; the ground is broken by abysses ; heavy clouds come floating down, riven every now and then by lurid bursts of flame. After a ballet, the Furies break into a chorus, in octaves—"Who is the mortal who dares approach this place of dread?"—strongly and decisively written. Then follows another ballet, the music to which is amongst the most effective ballet-music Gluck has written ; after which the question of the chorus is repeated, this time with an extension ; while through the orchestral accompaniment is heard incessantly the howling of Cerberus. Without any pause, the music leads into a short prelude for the harp, to which accompaniment Orpheus lifts up his voice in passionate entreaty. This is the marvellous scene that after the lapse of a century and a quarter has not lost one atom of its original force and beauty : that is among the most remarkable dramatic productions of that or any other age ; and which alone would suffice to give to future generations some indication of the wonderful power of Gluck, if all were lost of his work but this. It is almost impossible to speak with undue admiration of this supple, fluent melody, with its piercing anguish of entreaty, the admirable leading up, time after time, to the word of supplication, and the dramatic decision of the *No !* of the Furies, which, in the middle portion

of the air, where the word is pronounced on the B natural, is positively appalling. Nor is the succeeding chorus one whit inferior. There is something of the highest psychological expression in the passage in which, after warning the wretched intruder of the horrors that infest the place, they ask, "What wouldst thou, poor youth? What wouldst thou?" The orchestra takes up a short theme that seems by unconscious and subtle suggestion to lead us out of the immediate present, to throw our minds forward into the later development of the scene; it is one of those rare psychological moments that are the triumph of dramatic art. Repeating the word "What?" the suppressed rage of the Furies breaks out again in lurid passion. The reply of Orpheus, "In my breast are a thousand torments; hell itself is within me, its fires are burning in my heart," is as fine and as pregnant with musical beauty and as significant with dramatic meaning as his previous entreaty. The Furies reply in subdued tones, expressive of the power his song is beginning to exert on them, "What magic in him overcomes our rage?" Finally they throw open the gates to him, and their voices die down to exhaustion and submission, while the orchestra continues their previous theme.

The scene changes to the Elysian fields. Some of the happy spirits are performing a ballet, in accordance with eighteenth-century ideas of the occupations of happy spirits in Elysium, while Eurydice and the chorus sing of the quiet joys of their abode. Meanwhile Orpheus has entered, and expresses his wonder at the beauty of the scene; "How pure the light!"

His melody is something between aria-form and that of recitative (Gluck has marked it *quasi recitativo*); and, considered from a purely musical standpoint, it is among the finest of his creations; it has that unity and consistency that are so noticeable in his later works, especially in the scene in Armida's garden and in the first scene of *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Particularly fine is the effect of the constant modulation of the beautiful theme for the oboe.

On his asking the chorus for Eurydice, they reply, in a charming *ensemble*, that she is now approaching. The Act draws to a close with a beautiful ballet, reminding us in parts of the sweetest ballet-music in *Paris and Helen*, and a chorus. Seizing the hand of Eurydice, but without looking into her face, Orpheus hastens away with her.

The Third Act shows the pair in a labyrinthine cave. Orpheus is still leading her by the hand, and his face is still turned away from hers; he will answer nothing to her questions, but reiterates his entreaty to hasten onward. But her suspicions have been aroused by his averted face; she is beginning to doubt his passion, and all his entreaties are of no avail. It is curious to notice how Gluck is hampered here by the material he has chosen to work in. Time after time there seem to be struggling through the bald recitative a passion and a dramatic power that cannot find their full realisation in such a medium. As it is, just where the feelings of the personages demand lyrical treatment, Gluck is tied down, by a convention from which he cannot free himself, to a form of musical speech that is the very negation of all lyrical expansion.

Thus at one point of the dialogue we have the following :—

EURYDICE. But my delight at beholding you again,—you, alas, share it not.

ORPHEUS. O doubt not, but know hear me Oh sad fate ! Dear Eurydice, tarry no longer here.

EURYDICE. Why are you sad, when rapture surrounds us ?

ORPHEUS. It has happened as I foresaw ! And yet I must keep silence !

Now this speech of Orpheus is a kind of crisis of feeling in the dialogue, and no expression that the composer could put into it could be too deep or too sorrowful. Yet by reason of having chosen to write this part in recitative, Gluck can do no better than set to these important words the well-known conventional form of recitative conclusion, a fall of the voice from the tonic to the dominant, followed by a close, in the accompaniment, from dominant back again to tonic. His neglect of the emotional possibilities of this passage, and his abandonment of it to the most meaningless formalism that recitative can offer, is the more inexplicable in view of the fact that his setting of the very next words of Eurydice, “Wilt thou not embrace me ? not speak to me ?” etc., is strongly dramatic and passionate, and the recitative is on its way again to lyric warmth and fervour. The remainder of the recitative in this scene is alternately passionate and conventional, and on the two occasions on which the words, “O follow and be silent,” are repeated, Gluck,

as previously, puts no dramatic force whatever into them.

The lovers now break into open rupture. The voices, which commence in dialogue, soon blend in a duet, which, from a musical point of view, is one of the best numbers in the opera, but the dramatic signification of which is incessantly waxing and waning, some passages of meaning being neutralised by unnecessary repetition. Gluck, in fact, was here unconsciously in the dilemma that always attended his later consciously-pronounced theory of the opera; he was hovering irresolutely between an essentially *musical* method that made more exclusively for formal æsthetic gratification, and an essentially *dramatic* method in which purely musical gratification was to be subordinated to the more intellectual effects of declamation.

Eurydice breaks loose from Orpheus, and bursts into an aria, in which Gluck again alters the external characteristics of the music at every moment; the aria is alternately *allegro*, *lento*, *allegro*, *andante*, 2nd *andante*, *allegro*. Yielding to her entreaties, however, he at length looks at her, and immediately she feels the pangs of death upon her again. Her cry, "O ever beloved! O great gods, I tremble, I sink, I die!" is very fine. A recitative for Orpheus leads into the well-known *Che farò senza Euridice?* in which we have something of a reminiscence of the Orpheus of the first act. Then, just as he is about to slay himself, Cupid again appears, and tells him that the gods have had sufficient proof of his fidelity. Eurydice rises again, and ballets celebrate the happy

issue of their trials. The ballet-music is not specially noticeable, with the exception of the charming gavotte—which may be a reminiscence of the composer's early days of wandering among the country people—and the rather pretty opening phrase of the succeeding *andante* in D. The work concludes with a trio and chorus of rather commonplace character.

Such was the opera with which Gluck began his great reform. It is a mixture of extraordinary strength and extraordinary weakness. The beginning and the end, the overture and the finale, are especially vacuous and futile; and Berlioz is right in speaking of the "incroyable niaiserie" of the overture. Within the opera itself, again, as has been pointed out in the foregoing analysis, scenes of deathless interest and beauty exist side by side with passages almost devoid of either musical or dramatic significance. Gluck, in fact, was in a double dilemma, that of effecting a compromise between the musical and the dramatic interests in the lyrical portions, and that of striking a genuine balance between ordinary speech and pure lyricism in the recitatives. Thus his practice, like his subsequently-expressed theory, was vitiated from the outset by fallacy and contradiction; as will appear later, these were necessary results of his hovering irresolutely between two courses of action—between real expression of the emotional life of his own day in lyrical forms, actually and naturally created by this emotional life, and a fictitious expression, forced on him by the usual practice at that time of imitating a supposititious antiquity. Under such circumstances as these it was inevitable that Gluck's opera-style should

be always contradictory both of itself and of his written theories.

In spite of this, however, he had really achieved much in *Orfeo*. Though he preserved the old antagonism between aria and recitative, he yet aimed straight and strongly at the improvement of the latter, and at giving it a real place in the development of the opera, instead of making it, as in the conventional style, mere padding to fill up the spaces between the airs. This, of course, was a reform he had really in part attempted much earlier. In *Telemacco* he had already given a hint of what he could do in accompanied recitative. In *Orfeo*, however, he applies the principle more rigorously, by writing accompanied recitative throughout, and thus giving increased significance to the orchestra. A similar reform was effected in the aria by relinquishing, in most cases, the stereotyped *da capo* form, which, although not without its usefulness and its meaning in many places, was so palpably artificial in its ordinary employment as to be quite against the possibility of dramatic effect. That Gluck uses it occasionally here and in other places, and with success, is a proof that there is nothing essentially undramatic in the *da capo*, but that its employment must be strictly regulated by the contents of the aria. Nothing, for instance, could exceed the impressive effect of the return to the first subject in the aria of Iphigenia, *O toi qui prolongeas mes jours*. But Gluck's increasing perception of the possibilities open to free emotional outpouring, and his growing seriousness in relation to his art made him employ the *da capo* form very sparingly, and

substitute for it a form that was more unfettered, more direct, and more continuous. This reform almost necessarily begat another: the giving of greater unity to the drama by linking each successive piece to its predecessor; not, as formerly, by a mere juxtaposition, but causally, each dramatic moment growing out of that which preceded it. Here, again, Gluck had reached out tentatively to this reform on previous occasions, notably in *Telemacco*. That even in *Orfeo* he was prevented from carrying out each of these new methods to completer excellence, was due, in part at least, to the weaknesses in the construction of the libretto. No composer can write dramatic music to an undramatic situation, and it is the misfortune of *Orfeo* that the interest of the play degenerates at the end. Apart from the absurdity of Cupid's whole existence and appearance in the opera—for no study of character whatever is possible in the case of a mere allegorical personage such as this—his final coming as *deus ex machinâ* to give the completing touch to the drama is weak in the extreme. The ending of *Orfeo* is an "excursion in anti-climax;" the real end of the interest of the play is at the swooning of Eurydice.

Gluck, of course, had still his position to maintain at the Court at Vienna, and he found himself compelled, time after time, to fill up the intervals between his greater operas with the customary ephemeral works intended for performance at some imperial ceremony or at some country house. About a year after the performance of *Orfeo* he is supposed to have

set to music *Ezio*,* a three-act opera by Metastasio, of which only part of the second act is known.

In the following year he received from Dancourt an adaptation of a farce by Le Sage, entitled *Les Pèlerins de la Mecque*, which he set to music as a comic opera in three acts.† “I have suppressed the licentious in it,” writes Durazzo to Favart, “and I have only preserved the more noble portion and such comic scenes as could go along with it; I have no doubt that the poem, thus arranged in accordance with the actual taste of the nation, will make its mark, especially as it is supported by the music of M. Gluck, a man incontestably unique in his sphere. I would like the piece you are to adapt to be treated in this spirit. I think I have already, in my preceding letters, communicated to you my ideas on this matter; but I do not hesitate to repeat them, being anxious for them to have their full effect.” ‡

Durazzo meanwhile had set about having the score of *Orfeo* engraved, and had sent it to Favart at Paris, begging him to take the matter in hand. Favart handed it to Mondonville, who, on being applied to, estimated the probable cost at about 800 livres. On coming to the engraving of it, however, it was found

* It is not certain whether this opera was really written at this time (Dec. 1763), or twelve years earlier (1751), the work performed on the present occasion being a resuscitation of the older one. See Marx, I. 331-2.

† This is the work which has already been described as *La rencontre imprévue*.

‡ Lettre du Comte Durazzo à Favart, 19 Nov. 1763, in Desnoiresterres, p. 52.

to be full of errors and omissions,* and Favart passed the score on to Duni for correction. The latter, however, thinking it an opportunity to gain some profit for himself, gave Favart what was probably an exaggerated account of the confusion of the score. "Duni," writes Favart to Durazzo on the 19th April, 1763, "has made a mountain of the score of *Orfeo ed Euridice*; he says he could only undertake the task of correcting the copyist's errors for 500 livres. I have shown the score to Philidor, who is not nearly so difficult to deal with; he offers to correct the false notes gratis, and to superintend the engraving of the work personally; he only asks a single copy from Your Excellency. He has examined the opera attentively; he finds that the copyist's errors are not very numerous; he is enchanted with the beauty of the work; in several places he has shed tears of pleasure. He has always had a great admiration for the talent of the Chevalier Gluck; but his esteem has grown into veneration since he has become acquainted with *Orfeo*. So we can go on immediately with the engraving without the necessity of waiting for M. Gluck."† After some little trouble Favart managed to obtain a remittance from Durazzo, who had apparently overlooked this preliminary, and the work was taken in hand. Philidor has been accused of appropriating the melody of the air, *Chiamo il mio ben così*, and, by

* Berlioz has pointed out in detail the almost incredible carelessness of Gluck in the matter of his scores. See "A travers chants," pp. 201, 202.

† Desnoiresterres, pp. 53, 54.

means of a little dexterous manipulation, converting it to his own uses for an air, *Nous étions du même âge*, in his comic opera *Le Sorcier*. The fraud was pointed out by Sevelinges, and later by Berlioz. Fétis defended the French musician, on the ground that a comparison of dates proves the opera in question to have been performed before the publication of the score of *Orfeo*; to which it is replied that the above-quoted letter of Favart to Durazzo shows that some nine months had elapsed between the time when Philidor received the *Orfeo* and the performance of *Le Sorcier*. The curious in these matters of literary squabbling will find the subject thrashed out by Berlioz and Desnoiresterres.

At the coronation of the Archduke Joseph as King of the Romans at Frankfort-on-Main, on the 3rd April, 1764, *Orfeo* was produced with great success. Shortly after, Gluck severed his official connection with the Court, although in the beginning of 1765, for the marriage of Joseph II., he set to music *Il Parnasso confuso*, which was produced at Schönbrunn. Four archduchesses sang in it, and Archduke Leopold conducted. On the 30th of the same month (January) *Telemacco* was again produced. Another work, *La Corona* (words by Metastasio) which was intended for the celebration of the name-day of the Emperor, was rendered unnecessary by the monarch's sudden death. Meanwhile the engraving of the score of *Orfeo* was approaching completion, and Durazzo was astonished to find that the expenses had run to nearly 3000 livres. Gluck himself, in the meantime, had made a short visit to Paris, Durazzo begging Favart

to give him all the information he might need about the taste of Paris at that time. "I will send you also," he wrote, "the letter I wish to be put in front of the score of *Orfeo*, which must be corrected as soon as Gluck reaches Paris; and to this I beg you to force him, for he is naturally indolent and very indifferent about his own works."

The score of *Orfeo* sold very badly; in 1767, three years after its publication, only nine copies had been sold, and it is not known whether or not Durazzo indemnified Favart for the expense he had been put to.

Five years after *Orfeo*, Gluck gave to the world the second of the great works that were destined to immortalise his name; *Alceste* was produced at the Vienna Court Theatre on the 16th December 1767. Here again Calzabigi had co-operated with him, and the result was a libretto greatly superior to that of *Orfeo*, and, of necessity, leading to a finer opera. At a later period, when the work was given in Paris, Gluck altered it in some particulars, notably at the end, where Calzabigi's conclusion is dispensed with and a new character—Hercules—is introduced as *deus ex machinâ*, the words being supplied by Du Roullet. It will be best, however, to consider the opera in this place, as notwithstanding the alterations subsequently made, its true place is after *Orfeo* and before the works of Gluck's French period.

The overture to *Alceste* is a notable triumph of dramatic expression, and is all the more remarkable by its complete contrast with the aimless futility of the overture to *Orfeo*. Gluck's hold upon dramatic feeling

is admirable at all times, and nowhere, perhaps, has he maintained this hold with such consummate power as in the overture to *Alceste*. A short sombre phrase in D minor (*lente*) leads into an *andante* of a dolent expression, which in its turn glides into what may be called the second subject in A minor, a dolorous phrase of peculiar form, giving to the ear something of the same impression as a pyramid gives to the eye; it commences broadly and smoothly on the chord of the dominant, and then strikes upward to the pointed chord of the minor ninth,* producing a transition from absolute breadth of harmony to the most poignant contrast possible. This leads on into a passage of storm and stress, that finally dies down as if in exhaustion, leading again into the *lento* prelude, this time in A minor, and then into the *andante* again. The pyramidal theme now recurs in D minor, and here the ascent to the culminating note is even more dolorous, and the discord of the minor ninth even more poignant, by reason of its occurrence four notes higher in the scale, the minor ninth being this time based on A. The rest of the overture follows the order already described.

Here Gluck has given up all ideas of writing a formal "overture" in the customary style; and in endeavouring to strike out a new path for himself he is again unconsciously confronted by that irony of structure which we formerly observed in *Orfeo*. There he found himself—or, to speak more correctly, we found him—in a dilemma between speech-like recitative

* That is, the minor ninth from the dominant (E-F).

and passionate lyricism. Here the dilemma is between the dramatic form and the forms of pure instrumental music. Gluck is really aiming, in a tentative kind of way, at a primitive form of sonata-structure. But in music written in this form the themes should be strongly contrasted. Now Gluck does indeed employ two themes, looking at the overture broadly, but the contrast between them is exceedingly faint. The contrast, indeed, is mainly one of melody and harmony; the idea expressed in both is the same passionate grief and despair. And it was Gluck's true dramatic sense that kept him to this uniformity of idea, for *Alceste* is pre-eminently a drama of one idea; the burden of the play is sorrow and lamentation, which simply shifts from Admetus at the beginning of the drama to Alcestis in the subsequent acts. This then was the unconscious dilemma of Gluck. There can be no reasonable doubt that had the subject of the opera been more varied, had it been duo-thematic instead of mono-thematic, he would have written an overture representing both these aspects, and anticipating in some degree such a composition, for instance, as Mozart's *Magic Flute* overture, though he would of course have treated it less symphonically and with less wealth of technical display.

It is noticeable, too, that this overture has no formal close, but leads forthwith into a short chorus of five bars, "O gods, restore to us our king, our father!" The scene is at Phera, in front of the king's house, and the people are gathered there, awaiting news of the death of Admetus. A trumpet fanfare is heard; a herald steps forward and announces that the king is

now at the point of death, human aid being of no avail to save him. The recitative in which this is spoken is finely expressive, and the following chorus is almost equally so, its dignity, however, being slightly marred by a suspicion of artificiality in the treatment of the second portion. Evander, the confidant of Admetus, exhorts* the people to suspend their lamentations; the palace doors open, and Alcestis herself comes forth with her children and attendants. She is greeted with a double chorus, "O unfortunate Admetus! O unhappy Alcestis! O destiny too cruel! O fate too heavy!" treated somewhat in the manner of the strophe and antistrophe of the chorus in the Greek drama. The chorus is in the minor, and a very sombre and yet piercing effect is given to it by the constant employment of the chord of the diminished seventh. Alcestis replies in a recitative that again shows an advance on *Orfeo*, and then breaks out into an aria (*adagio*), "O gods, relax the rigour of my fate!" which after a short *moderato* passage leads abruptly into a more passionate *allegro*, "Nothing can equal my despair," which is perhaps Gluck's finest achievement up to this time. It is full of fire and mobility, and both the downward modulations on the words addressed to her children, and the agitated orchestral figure as she presses them to her bosom, show the completer mastery the composer has now attained over the vocabulary of his art.

The attendants and people repeat the previous chorus, "O unfortunate Admetus!" and Alcestis summons

* In the French score.

them to attend her in the temple, there to offer their supplications to the gods ; and they quit the stage to the accompaniment of the first chorus.

The next scene is in the temple of Apollo, showing the statue of the god and the sacred tripod. The High Priest and the attendants are preparing for a sacrifice ; their preparations are interrupted by the entrance of Alcestis and her people. The "pantomime" that takes place in the temple, with its exquisite simplicity of scoring—strings and flutes—is well known. The following chorus and solo of the High Priest are in some respects the finest passages in the whole opera. To an agitated accompaniment he implores the god to have mercy on the dying man, and to remember the time when Admetus had sheltered him in the days of his trouble and banishment. Not the least noteworthy thing is that the piece is in $\frac{3}{8}$ time, which it is usually difficult to treat gravely and impressively. There is something terrible in this music, with its agonising theme and its feverish repetitions ; it reminds us somewhat of the scene with the priests of Baal on the mountain in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, except that Gluck's scene has more of wild abandonment of passion, of almost unspeakable excitement striving to make itself articulate. Dramatically it is as fine as anything he ever wrote. It gives way for a moment to a recitative for the High Priest, and is then taken up again. A remarkable effect is produced by the contrast between all this intensity of human frenzy, the moving and gesticulating swarm of men and women, and the statuesque immobility of the image of Apollo ; the mere contrast of itself is full of dramatic effect.

After a repetition of the previous pantomime Alcestis herself speaks, imploring the intercession of the god. Then follows another pantomime of a much more excited nature than the first, and the High Priest declares that the god has heard. In a recitative of the “accompanied” order, and of a chameleon variety of expression, he commands the queen to veil her pride of station, and to listen to the oracle in fear and trembling. She prostrates herself, her brow upon the ground, while the oracle utters its famous reply, “Admetus must die to-day, if no other will die in his stead!” No one requires to be told of the terror-striking effect of this wonderful utterance, with its dreadful monotone for the voice, and the shifting colour of the orchestra. It is interesting to note that the form in which it is so well known is that of the later French, not of the earlier Italian score, and that Gluck has changed it decidedly for the better, by making the downward progression in the orchestra more gradual, and thus introducing perhaps the most striking chord of all—that of the third inversion of the dominant seventh, which gives the passage most of its air of inexorable severity. “A fearful oracle!” sing the chorus, while the voice of the High Priest is heard asking, “All silent? which of you will offer himself to death!” The people are seized with terror; shouting “Fly! Fly!” they hasten out of the temple, leaving Alcestis alone with her children. She resolves to sacrifice herself for her husband; the air in which she announces this determination is subject to many changes of time—as was the habit of Gluck—according to the dominant emotion to be expressed. Here

again the orchestra has a part of the utmost importance to play ; it emphasises the vocal utterance at every point in the most varied manner. In a vigorous recitative Alcestis calls upon the gods to accept her sacrifice, and the High Priest, taking it in their name, tells her that Admetus is now restored to health again, and that at the close of day her sacrifice will be demanded of her. "I will hasten to fulfil a duty so dear to me," replies Alcestis, and breaks out into the celebrated aria, *Divinités du Styx*. Berlioz has pointed out how the peculiarities of the French translation compelled Gluck to alter the arrangement of the syllables in the Italian score, by which the dramatic effect he had primarily achieved was somewhat weakened. "Is it possible to believe that Gluck, in order to comply with the exigencies of French versification or the impotence of his translation, should have consented to disfigure, or, to speak more justly, to destroy the marvellous arrangement of the opening of this incomparable air, which he has for the rest so advantageously altered? Yet this is the truth. The first verse of the Italian text is this :

Ombre, larve, compagne di morte !

"The first word, *ombre*, with which the air begins, being set to the two long notes, of which the first can and ought to be swelled out, gives the voice time to develop itself, and makes the response of the infernal gods, represented by the horns and the trombones, much more striking, the song ceasing just as the instrumental cry is heard. It is the same with the two

sounds written a third higher than the first two, for the second word *larve*. In the French translation, instead of the two Italian words, which might have been translated entire by simply adding an *s* to each, we have *Divinités du Styx*; consequently, instead of one organic phrase, excellent for the voice, and with the sense contained completely in one bar, the change renders necessary five insipid repetitions of the same note for the five syllables *dī-vi-ni-tés du*, the word *Styx* being placed in the succeeding bar, at the moment of the entry of the wind instruments and the fortissimo of the orchestra, which crush it and prevent its being heard. So that, the sense being incomplete in the bar where the melody is free to show, the orchestra appears to enter too soon, and to be responding to an unfinished interpellation. Further, the Italian phrase *compagne di morte*, on which the voice can deploy itself so finely, being suppressed in the French, and a silence substituted for it, leaves a lacuna in the melody which nothing can justify. The fine idea of the composer would be reproduced without any alteration, if, instead of the words I have noted, we were to adopt the following :

Ombres, larves, pâles compagnes de la mort !” *

In this aria, again, Gluck constantly changes the time (*andante, adagio, andante, un poco andante, lento, andante, lento, andante espressivo, presto, andante, adagio, andante*). From this it will be seen how strongly such an aria partakes of the character of

* “A travers chants,” pp. 172, 173.

painting. Although he had partly given up the old attempt to imitate nature (*gleichniss-Arie*), he was still making the attempt at a kind of descriptive survey of the passions by means of changing *tempi* and rhythms. How far this was rendered necessary by the nature of the groundwork afforded him in the words it is, of course, impossible to say; what we can be certain about is the masterly manner in which Gluck has accomplished this descriptive survey of the emotions.

In the Italian score, the second act opens with a scene in a gloomy forest near Phera, sacred to the powers of the under-world. It is night. Alcestis is hastening through the forest, accompanied by Ismene, who, suspecting her purpose, enquires of her why she thus leaves her husband and children. Alcestis commands her to be silent and obey, and after further wandering dismisses her. Left alone, she realises to the full all the horrors, the fearful sights and sounds of the forest, but her purpose is unchangeable. She calls on the ghostly powers, and is answered by the invisible Thanatos, "What wouldst thou?" Gradually through the darkness she begins to discern his fearful form and ghastly livid face; but nothing now can turn her back, and to his question whether she is resolved to die, she boldly answers "Yes?" Her sacrifice is accepted by Thanatos, who invites her to descend into the gloom with him; the ghostly steersman waits for her on the banks of Styx. But she obtains permission first to return to Phera, to bid Admetus and her children farewell; and her exit is made to the accompaniment of a horrible pantomime by the spirits.

It will at once be understood what an opportunity

such a scene as this afforded to those powers of gloomy realism that Gluck possessed in such abundance; and in omitting the scene from the French version of the opera, and making the second act commence with the festivities attending the recovery of Admetus, he has decidedly weakened the opera in one way, although the joyful commencement of the second act, as it now stands, has the merit of a clear and vivid contrast with the end of the first. This, however, is barely a compensation for the loss of so fine a scene as that in the forest. In any case, the contrast obtained by the festal chorus was equally obtainable later on; while it is quite certain that the dramatic structure of the opera has been weakened by reason of the fact that the recovery of Admetus is not led up to with due gradation. It cannot follow consistently, at the beginning of the second act, the mere resolve of Alcestis at the end of the first; it can only consistently come after the voluntary offer of herself to the powers of the under-world.

The opening chorus, "Let transport take the place of grief," is charmingly beautiful, and is followed by the regulation ballet, of which the two most noticeable sections, from the point of view of musical feeling, are the final *andante* (in G), and the second *andante* (in G minor), the latter especially being most characteristic of Gluck. It is a peculiarity of some of his ballet music that the mere perusal of it in the score, quite independently of any theatrical performance, suggests the most definite pictures of the dancers' movements; they scarcely require actual human representation, so pronounced and so definite is their

character ; an indication of the extremely realistic manner in which Gluck was able to conceive not only the mental states of his characters, but the proper physical correlatives of these states.

After a repetition of the chorus, greetings take place between the recovered king and his subjects. Nothing could well be finer than the beautiful recitative of Admetus, "O my children ! O my friends !" with the dolorous wailing phrase in the orchestra (in D minor ; repeated later in F minor), that seems to link itself by association with the poignant "second subject" of the overture. Admetus inquires the meaning of his restoration to life, and hears for the first time of the unknown one who has voluntarily gone to death for him. "O fearful oracle !" he exclaims ; but the chorus break in again, interrupting his words of protest. The chorus is especially noticeable for a charming quartett in the middle portion. Then, just as Admetus is wondering at the absence of Alcestis, the queen herself appears, slowly and mournfully, and in gloomy contrast with the general appearance of festivity. The chorus again exhort to merriment, interrupted for a moment by Alcestis with a poignant cry of pain, that seems wrung from her secret heart, "Their songs remind me of my grief ;" and after another short recitative by Admetus, who is happy in the love of his people, there follows the exquisite chorus which also does duty in the first scene of *Paris and Helen*, "Deck your brows with garlands new." The short intercalary passage given to Alcestis during a momentary cessation of the chorus is one of Gluck's highest dramatic efforts ; "O gods, sustain my

courage ; my excess of grief I cannot hide. In spite of myself, the tears fall from my eyes." It is in his best manner throughout ; the voice part, which is confined within very narrow limits, suggests utter weariness and despair of soul ; while the finely graduated sway and undulation of the orchestra about the voice add a further element of sorrow. Admetus now questions her as to the meaning of her sadness, but she can only answer, "Alas !" and his exhortations to joy are vain. His fears increase : he asks her in accents of passionate rapidity to tell him the meaning of it all. "Do you no longer love me, then ?" he asks her ; and she replies, "The gods who have heard my vows and my sighs, they know I love you !" Her short aria, "Never have I cherished my life but for you alone," is unnecessary in this place, and is a weakening of the dramatic texture ; it retards and hinders the full sweep of passion on to the scene where she is forced to tell him that it is she who has offered herself to the gods for him, and she who must die in his stead. This scene Gluck manages very finely, bringing the catastrophe to a head in a duet in recitative, increasing in intensity every moment, up to the slow despairing cry of the queen, "And who but Alcestis should die for you ?" The chorus add their strain of astonishment and sorrow to that of Admetus, who breaks out into passionate denunciation of her act, and declares his resolve to offer himself again to the gods as a victim, or failing that to take his own life, that he may not be parted from Alcestis. It is difficult to characterise the music to this scene. It is hardly recitative ; perhaps it more nearly approaches

declamation, in the general sense of the term. Gluck is at his highest pitch of abandonment here ; never in his recitative have the heart-beats been so violent, the pulse so feverish ; he is carried away on a flood of passion so swift and so turbulent that no time is left him to collect and arrange his ideas according to any definite forms. He is hardly writing music, in the signification that word usually carries ; he is eloquent, rhetorical, forensic. This spirit is carried on even into the aria, "O cruel one," where an additional poignancy of expression is imported into the orchestra as, towards the end, Admetus, having lashed himself into a fury of grief and anger, rushes wildly from Alcestis.

When he is gone she prays for him, while the people mourn her too early death in a chorus of exquisite simplicity and beauty. Bidding them not to mourn for her, she herself bewails her setting sun in an aria long and justly celebrated for its pathos, its beauty, and its deep dramatic power. Then her regret becomes more mordant ; she breaks into a passionate cry in the manner of the previous recitative of Admetus. Interrupted for a moment by the chorus, "Oh how the dream of life flies rapidly away ! like a dying flower withered by the wind !" to the philosophical meaning of which Gluck has given an extraordinarily fine expression, she breaks forth again into her delirious ecstasy of grief and despair.

At the beginning of the third act, in the Italian score, Admetus is wandering about distractedly in the decorated hall of his palace. He has made them inquire of the oracle once more ; Evander enters and

tells him that all has been in vain, and that Alcestis must die. She herself comes in to him with her children and attendants. Her strength is slowly passing away, but before she dies she implores Admetus (as in the play of Euripides) not to take another wife, which he faithfully promises. Then the powers of death come to claim her. Admetus offers himself to them in vain ; Alcestis swoons and sinks into their midst, murmuring "I die !" and is taken from under the very eyes of the terrified and sorrow-stricken people. Admetus, who has temporarily left the hall, rushes in distractedly, followed by a number of his attendants. He endeavours to kill himself that he may be united with her again, but before he has time to accomplish his purpose, Apollo appears seated in the clouds, Alcestis with him ; and the husband and wife are once more united.

Gluck changed entirely this ending to the opera in arranging it for the French stage. "After the first four representations," says Berlioz,* "according to the journals of the day, Gluck, having received the news of the death of his niece, whom he loved tenderly, set out for Vienna, whither he was called by his domestic grief. Immediately after his departure *Alceste*, with which the *habitués* of the opera were becoming less and less pleased, disappeared from the bill. To recompense the public, they thought of mounting a new ballet at great expense. The ballet fell flat. The directors of the Opera, not knowing what to do next, had the hardihood to produce Gluck's

* "A travers chants," pp. 185, 186.

work again, but with the addition of this rôle of Hercules, which, coming in towards the end of the drama, had no interest and no purpose ; the *dénoûment* being possible simply with the intervention of Apollo, as Calzabigi had written it. . . . It was an unfortunate idea that had been suggested to Du Roullet for this *reprise*, and we may suppose that Gluck, to whom it was no doubt submitted in letters to him at Vienna, only adopted it reluctantly, since he obstinately refused to write an air for the new character. A young French musician named Gossec was therefore commissioned to write it."

There is really not much to choose between the two endings in point of dramatic, or undramatic, effect ; each is essentially weak. But the French *Alceste* has been decidedly vulgarised by the introduction of the swashbuckler Hercules.

The act begins with Evander and the chorus mourning the untimely end of Alcestis, the chorus "Weep, O Thessaly !" being that which in the Italian score was sung as Alcestis disappeared with the ministers of death. It is deeply and painfully impressive, and its sombre effect is heightened by an inner chorus repeating it as a kind of sorrowful echo. Then Hercules enters, announcing in an affable way that having seized a moment's rest from the toils imposed on him by the implacable Juno, he has come to revisit his friend Admetus. On being informed by one of the attendants of the sacrifice of Alcestis, and of the resolve of Admetus to follow her into the shades, he declares his ability and his determination to rescue her, setting forth his views on the subject in a very

ranting aria, "In vain Hell reckons on its victims." This is the aria which, we are glad to be assured, is not from the pen of Gluck but from that of Gossec.

Meanwhile Alcestis is groping about painfully and fearfully in the gloom of the under-world, her soul a prey to all the dreadful horrors of the place. Her fine recitative is interrupted by the chorus of spirits: "Unhappy one, where goest thou? Thou shalt descend to the dark river at the close of day. Not long shalt thou tarry here!"—in which the voices maintain a single note throughout, while the orchestra weaves its sombre harmony about it in passionate unrest. The scoring—strings, horns, trombones, clarinettes—is particularly impressive. The whole passage has an iron rigidity, something chilling, terror-striking, inexorable, that makes it even a finer utterance than that of the oracle in the first act. The succeeding aria is distinctly lower in conception and in execution; it is thoroughly cold and artificial. Here Alcestis meets her husband, whose prayer has been rejected by the gods, and who has come to perish with her. The aria in which she conjures him to return and guard his children is, like the previous one, inexpressibly poor and glacial. It is strange that after this should come a scene that has many claims to be regarded as the finest in the opera. "What! live without thee!" exclaims Admetus. "Live to abhor the light of heaven and the cruel gods, authors of all our ill! to drag life on through terrible days, torn by new torments! Oh Heaven! Alcestis!" And then he breaks out into that wonderful air, "Alcestis, in the name of the gods, behold the fate that is crushing

me!" in which Gluck attains a mastery of his materials such as he has nowhere surpassed; in which voice and orchestra blend and separate and re-unite, each giving life unto the other, till the spirit that animates them is absolutely one and indivisible. Nowhere has he treated the orchestra so organically; he gives it a writhing theme, similar in expression, though of course not in actual form, to the well-known one at the commencement of "Tannhäuser's Pilgrimage," which weaves in and out among the vocal themes with a peculiar sinuous motion, while the climax comes in the marvellous ascending cry at the end of the aria, where wave seems to follow wave, passion to press on passion.

Unfortunately the succeeding scenes between them are almost commonplace, and when Thanatos appears, telling Alcestis that Charon awaits her, and warning her of the consequences to Admetus if she fails in courage now, his aria is banal and undramatic in the extreme, belonging to the same showy and superficial class as the previous air of Hercules. "Let him live!" cries Alcestis, in spite of the protest of Admetus, and the chorus breaks in sombrely, till the voice of Admetus rises above them in one last passionate cry. Just as he is about to follow her, however, Hercules appears on the scene, and the powers of death are vanquished. But the opera has already degenerated sadly, and we are not now surprised at the thoroughly Gallic exchanges of compliments between the god and the king:

HERCULES. From the hands of friendship receive, my dear Admetus, the worthy object of thy passion.

ADMETUS. Ah! my felicity is all the more complete when I reflect that it is from my friend I receive the happiness.

The inevitable *deus ex machinâ* appears; Apollo descends in a cloud, and addresses the pair of heroes in this wise: "Pursue thy course, oh worthy son of the sovereign of heaven, and immortality will be thy portion. Heaven, that regards thee, admires thy courage, and thy place is already marked out by the side of the gods! Hail, happy husband! and let this hideous place disappear at the sound of my voice, to serve as an example to mortals enchained under the laws of Hymen!" And the opera finishes with a commonplace *terzett*, a short recitative between Alcestis and Admetus, and a final chorus of almost incredible banality. The usual ballets bring up the rear.

Thus Gluck had deliberately spoiled his opera in his concessions to Parisian taste. The ending with Apollo was bad enough dramatically in all conscience, but with the introduction of Hercules everything became degraded and vulgarised. It is almost impossible to imagine how a work that began so finely should end in such sad commonplace. After the commencement of the last act, every genuine human passion vanishes, and we are left with the absurd conventions and artificialities of the worst part of the French society of that time. The degeneration is all the more regrettable in view of the fact that the promise of the first two acts had been something exceptional; parts of them, indeed, were never surpassed by Gluck at any time. But all unity

of conception, all high strenuousness of purpose, were utterly inefficacious when the librettist was allowed to perpetrate his manifold inanities unchecked; the greatest subject for wonder is that both in the last century and in this, composers have managed to produce so much fine work under circumstances of such unmitigated stupidity on the part of their collaborators.

The tenor in the Viennese performance of *Alceste* was Tibaldi, who had sung at Bologna in Gluck's *Il Trionfo di Clelia* in 1762. We are told that his upper notes had deteriorated somewhat, but that he more than made up for this by his superb acting and his intelligent facial expression. The Alcestis was Madame Buonascosi, who till then had only sung in comic parts. Her impersonation of Alcestis was so fine that she became the recognised exponent of Gluck's music.* The opera does not seem to have been at once successful; it was probably too gloomy and too severe for the Italianised Viennese sense of that day. "What!" they cried, "the theatre is closed for nine days, and then on the tenth we simply assist at a requiem!" Others said they had come to weep through compassion, not through *ennui*. One wanted his money back; "another, more cynical, asked what pleasure one could find in the jeremiads of an idiot who died for her husband."† On the other hand, among more enlightened hearers, *Alceste* met with a recognition that would easily console Gluck

* Marx, i. 392.

† Desnoiresterres, pp. 63, 64.

for the disparagement of the Philistine element. "I am in the land of marvels," wrote Sonnenfels in his *Briefe über die Wiener-schaubühne*, a day or two after the battle, the result of which for a little time appeared uncertain; "a serious opera without *castrati*, music without solfeggi—or to speak more correctly, without gurgling—an Italian poem without bombast and without attempts at wit—such is the triple prodigy with which the Court Theatre has opened." * And perhaps the best measure of the success *Alceste* won is the fact that it ran for two years in Vienna.

The score was engraved in 1769, and in the celebrated dedicatory epistle to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Gluck formulates that theory of his art which has been the starting-point of so much æsthetic discussion. It will be quoted and considered later. †

Two years after, the third of the great operas,

* See Nohl, "Gluck und Wagner," p. 65.

† Desnoiresterres has the following: "A note by Brack, the translator of Burney, attributes the redaction of this epistle to the Abbé Coltellini. 'This preface,' he says, 'which is a masterpiece of taste, erudition, and musical reasoning, was written by the Abbé Coltellini, a distinguished poet who was then at Vienna. The English author, who attributes it to Gluck, was surely ignorant of this circumstance, as was, in France, the author of the *Mercure* of 1769, who gives this composition to the German composer, whose ideas and dramatic conceptions the poet was no doubt only transcribing.'" Desnoiresterres, p. 66, note. Gluck's own style was, indeed, so truly execrable that there is no difficulty in believing the preface to *Alceste* to have been written for him.

Paride ed Elena, was produced at Vienna. The poet's name does not appear on the title-page of the score ; but it is evident from a letter by Gluck to the *Mercure de France*, four years later, that Calzabigi was again the librettist.* Here again Gluck prefixed to the score an epistle dedicatory ; it may be quoted here : " I only determined to publish the music of *Alceste*," he says, " in the hope of finding imitators ; I was bold enough to flatter myself that in following the path I had opened out, people would be moved to destroy the abuses that had been introduced into Italian opera to the dishonouring of it. I confess with sorrow that up to the present I have tried in vain. The *demi-savants*, the professors of taste—a species unhappily too numerous, and at all epochs a thousand times more pernicious to the progress of the fine arts than that of the ignorant—have banded themselves together against a method which, if it were once established, would annihilate their pretensions.

" It has been thought possible to criticise *Alceste* after chaotic rehearsals, badly directed and still more badly executed ; they have calculated in an apartment the effect the opera might produce in a theatre, with the same sagacity as in a Greek town they once tried to judge, at the distance of a few feet, the effect of statues destined for the summits of lofty columns. One of those delicate amateurs who put their whole soul into their ears will have found an air too harsh, a transition too strongly expressed, or badly prepared, without considering that, in the situation, this air or

* Marx, i. 397.

this transition was the sublime of expression, forming the happiest contrast. A pedantic harmonist will have remarked an ingenious negligence or a fault in the score, and will have hastened to denounce the one and the other as so many unpardonable sins against the mysteries of harmony; soon after, several voices will unite to condemn the music as barbarous, savage and extravagant.

“It is true that the other arts are scarcely better off, and that they are judged with neither more justice nor more intelligence; and your highness can easily comprehend the reason; the more we are bent on seeking perfection and truth, the more necessary do precision and exactitude become I wish no other proof of this than my air in *Orfeo—Che farò senza Euridice?* Make the least change in it, whether in the movement or in the turn of expression, and it becomes an air of marionettes; in a work of this kind, a note more or less sustained, an increase of tone or of time neglected, an *appoggiatura* out of place, a trill, a passage, a roulade, can destroy the effect of an entire scene. And when it is a question of executing music written according to the principles I have laid down, the presence of the composer is, so to speak, as necessary as the sun is to the works of Nature; he is its life and soul; without him all remains in confusion and chaos. But we must expect to meet with these obstacles when we see in the world men who, because they have a pair of eyes and ears, no matter of what kind, think themselves in a position to judge of the fine arts.” *

* Desnoiresterres, pp. 68, 69.

Such was the dedication of *Paris and Helen* to the Duke of Braganza, in the score published at Vienna in 1770. Helen, it is necessary to premise, is not the later heroine of Troy ; the story deals with her in the time before she had become the bane of Ilion ; and although Menelaus is incidentally mentioned in the course of the work, he does not appear in it as an actual character. The opera is simply concerned with the wooing of the Spartan by the Phrygian, his pleading and her final surrender.

The overture is in three sections, but of a totally different nature from the old "symphony." Besides being musically interesting, each of the sections has reference to and is preparatory to the opera itself, and one or two suggestions from the overture actually reappear later on. Especially noticeable is the middle piece, *moderato con espressione*, in A minor, of an exquisitely languorous expression.

The first act opens on the sea-coast near Sparta ; all around are the tents of the Trojans, while their ships are visible in the distance. They are making offerings to Venus, singing the beautiful chorus *Non sdegnare, o bella Venere*, which Gluck has also employed in *Alceste*. There, however, it is as essentially out of place as in *Paris and Helen* it is appropriate and harmonious. Paris interrupts his followers with an aria in which the contrast with the rigid form and heavy-laden atmosphere of *Alceste* is at once noticeable. Gluck's hand in *Paris and Helen* was so much freer than in either of his previous works, that he could surrender himself luxuriantly to his more purely lyrical impulses, that only required a fitting occasion to burst the iron gates of formality and reserve. It is curious to reflect how

greatly the composer who writes only vocal compositions is dependent for his fame upon the nature of the verbal material that is supplied to him. We have only to consider Gluck never having had such a libretto as *Paris and Helen* within his reach, to see how we would thereby have missed the evidence of this lyrical side of his genius ; for *Paris and Helen* stands quite apart, even away from *Armida*, among his operas. It is the product of a frame of mind so widely different from that which gave birth to the others, that it is with something of bewildered delight that we surrender ourselves to this stream of pure and engaging lyrism. And it is further noticeable that in this opera Calzabigi himself has also written verse of a more genuinely poetical nature than any he had previously produced ; verse with something of the real "lyrical cry," that found an echo in Gluck's beautiful music. When we think of the often false and tawdry sentiment of *Alceste*, for instance, we can understand how the composer would feel an added stimulus to write good music to such words as those of Paris' first aria :

Oh del mio dolce ardor
Bramato oggetto,
L'aure che tu respiri
Alfin respiro.
Ovunque il guardo io giro,
Le tue vaghe sembianze
Amore in me dipinge ;
Il mio pensier sifinge
Le più liete speranze,
E nel desio che così
M'empie il petto,
Cerco te, chiamo te,
Spero e sospiro.

After the aria, the first chorus is repeated in another key as a ballet, and Paris again breaks forth into song ; he is interrupted by a Trojan, who comes to tell him of an approaching messenger from Sparta. The messenger, in fact, is our old friend Cupid, who comes disguised in Spartan garb, and followed by a Spartan train ; the god passes under the name of Erasto. To the question of what brings him to Sparta, Paris disclaims any intention of seeking riches, honour or aggrandisement, and recounts his experiences as judge between Venus, Pallas, and Juno in the tournament of beauty. Erasto quickly tells him he has "read his heart," that the motive impelling him to come to Sparta has been love for Helen, and that the aid of Venus herself will be given him in his undertaking. Then follows a charming duet, in which Paris asks in astonishment how Erasto has been able thus to discover his intentions, while the god assures him that love is so plainly written on his countenance as to be legible by all. Again he promises in recitative that Helen shall be his, ratifies the contract in an aria, and departs. Meanwhile, more Spartans have been flocking in, and stand amazed at the luxurious presents that are being arranged in order by the Trojans ; at length, encouraged by their reception, they join the visitors in festive dances.

The ballet music of *Paris and Helen* is remarkable throughout for beauty and elegance. Here the second piece (in C major), is a pleasing snatch of melody, more in the style of Mozart than in that of the Gluck of *Alceste* and *Iphigenia in Tauris* ; but the most noticeable section, perhaps even the most remarkable

lyrical outpouring in a work that is lyrical from beginning to end, is the beautiful fourth movement (*amabile moderato*). One does not quite know what to make of this music, meeting it thus in the score of a man usually associated with all that is sternly and rigidly dramatic. It seems to stand away from the ordinary world of Gluck's dramas, to come as an echo from distant cloud-capped mountains; it has the elusive beauty of a summer night, faintly odorous with the perfume of hidden flowers. It is the Romantic spirit crying in the womb of time, as yet unborn; it is the utterance of a mind that is already swinging slightly round from the broad-based, externalised life of its own day, towards a life more inward, more fugitive and more mysterious; its note is *Sehnsucht*, not the *Sehnsucht nach Sehnsucht* of later Romantic art, but the first incomprehensible stirrings of a new *genre* of emotion, too vague for concrete expression, and unable to find voice in any art but music. In *Armida*, too, he touches chords that thrill more with the life of this century than of his own, notably in that moment of languorous rapture when Rinaldo looks up into the face of the enchantress, murmuring "Armida!" If only the master had given us a little more of the "harmonious madness" that was in him! A student of the music of the eighteenth century, so formal, so precise, so regular, and frequently so impersonal, is inexpressibly grateful for these few moments when he lights upon a passage that seems to be warm with blood or moist with tears, some healthy abandonment to feeling, some taste of cool fresh water in the bitter brine.

But to return to the opera, the first act of which is closed by these ballets. The second act opens in a room in the palace at Sparta, where Helen is seated in the midst of her attendants, and with Erasto by her side. Erasto enumerates in recitative the charms of Paris, till the colloquy is cut short by the entry of the Trojan youth himself. Then comes a dialogue of "asides" in recitative :

PARIS. O queen ! (Ye gods !)

HELEN. (What do I see ?)

PARIS. (What loveliness !)

HELEN. (What a countenance !)

PARIS. (Oh ! what anguish seizes my soul !)

Further compliments pass between the pair, Paris singing the praises of Helen's beauty ; and finally Paris, Helen and Erasto indulge in a *terzett*, in which Paris is rather bantered by the young queen. His next aria "Sweet images of Love," in which we again hear suggestions of the later Romantic art, is one of the most beautiful melodies Gluck ever wrote. This finishes the second act.

At the beginning of the third, the scene is in the courtyard of the palace ; Paris and Helen enter to watch the games that are to be given in honour of the stranger. There is a fine chorus of athletes, followed by a tenor solo, and this again by an "aria of athletes" for the orchestra—a bold and vigorous composition. Finally, the games are over, and all leave the stage but Paris, Helen and Erasto. Helen begs that Paris will sing to her, as a contrast to the rude Spartan strains, some melody of Troy, and Paris gladly seizes the

opportunity thus to express his love for her. The harp is brought to him, and he sings a passionate song in praise of her eyes, that approaches both in feeling and in treatment the love-songs of the later Italian schools. It is marred, however, by a slight monotony in the harmony, the ear being sometimes led to expect a modulation where none is forthcoming. Ever through the aria Helen interrupts him, as she gradually sees that it is she whom he is endeavouring to reach through the song.

Helen's abrupt termination of the aria has a disastrous effect on Paris; he is on the point of swooning, so that Helen has to despatch Erasto for assistance. Her recitative here is extremely fine and expressive, dignifying and ennobling of itself this poor play of marionette-passion. In the midst of it Paris recovers, and Helen debates within herself whether she ought to stay or fly. "O stay and hear me!" cries Paris, and begins the first part of a duet that is the finest psychological expression in the whole opera; the opposition of Helen's sense of duty to the passion of Paris, and her vacillating moods of feeling, are skilfully portrayed. Probably Gluck never again had such a truly lyrical moment as this; at times we seem quite transported out of the pre-Romantic opera, so easy and so free is the movement, so genuinely passionate the feeling, so truly does the musical form cling to and obey the poetical emotion. And again when, at the conclusion of the duet, Helen flies from him, the following aria of Paris is equally true and nervous in expression. This was indeed music that drew blood, in Gluck's own significant phrase. It is the master at his greatest ease

and most consummate power; there is less divorcement here than in much of his finest music between the idea and the manner of expressing it; he has struck the perfect balance between dramatic intensity and emotional beauty and artistic objectivity of form.

The act closes with the return of the athletes, and ballets in honour of the victors.

At the beginning of the fourth act, Helen is sitting in her chamber, holding in her hand a letter from Paris. She reads it in recitative; he is begging her to fly with him. Undecided for a time whether simply to answer his letter by scornful silence, she finally resolves to reply, and sitting down writes a letter to him, reproaching him for having come to Sparta to induce her to leave her husband, and advising him to seek elsewhere for another love. She considerably imparts to the audience, in recitative, the words as they flow from her pen. Calling Erasto, she bids him deliver the letter, but before he has time to depart Paris himself enters and Erasto hands the note to him. Then comes a *terzett*, at the conclusion of which Erasto disappears, and Paris and Helen break out into one of the loveliest snatches of duet imaginable; its only defect is that it is too short. In a long recitative he continues his attack on her wavering resolution, till, almost vanquished, she implores him to leave her and forget her. "Forget thee!" he cries, and bursts into an aria not without passion, though it is disfigured by an absurdity that might be taken as a matter of course had we met with it in an opera of the Italian school, but that is inexplicable in Gluck, especially in the light of the dedicatory epistle to *Alceste*. The aria is

of the *da capo* form ; and Gluck, either because he thinks it a sign of passion to be unable to finish one's words, or because he did not know how to get the full number of syllables in with his music, makes Paris cut the second part of the aria summarily short in the middle of a word in order to begin the *da capo* ; thus : "La tue celeste imagine fra l'ombre ancor l'avrò sempre d'avan. . . . Di te scordarmi," etc. (Dein holdes, zartes Götterbild wird noch an Lethe's Strand mich treu umschwe. . . . Ich dich vergessen ! etc.)

Having finished his aria, Paris rushes off the stage, while Helen, left alone, again hovers between love and duty, finally appealing, in a fine aria, to the gods for help.

In the third act Erasto, in the garden of the palace, rouses Helen's grief by telling her that Paris means to return to his own country, being disappointed at her harshness ; and in an air of exquisite simplicity and breadth she warns all maidens not to give ear to the voice of man : "All his words are but mockery." Then, as Paris himself enters, and Helen turns furiously on Erasto, the latter discovers himself : "I am not Erasto but Cupid ;" and at last Helen yields to the entreaties of Paris to fly with him. Suddenly a peal of thunder is heard, and looking up they see Pallas descending from the clouds. The angry goddess pours out the vials of her wrath upon them, prophesying the future evil that shall come of their love ; here Gluck employs in the orchestra the theme that figures at the end of the first section of the overture. Then comes the second theme of the overture, during which the pair hover for a moment

between doubt and resolution, and then the third theme, when, rushing into each other's arms, they cast the evil prognostications of Pallas to the winds. Thus the overture has direct reference to, and is closely bound up with, the later course of the opera. Cupid now appears, promising them support and happiness in spite of Pallas ; and after a florid duet the pair set out for the shore. The scene changes to the coast. It is night ; in the distance are seen the Trojan ships. Sailors and attendants of Paris and Helen come down to the shore, and in an exquisite chorus call on them to embark while the sea is tranquil. Then follows an aria by Cupid and a duet between Paris and Helen, and the three enter the ship and leave the shore to the strains of the former beautiful chorus.

It will be seen at once how different all this is from *Alceste*. The contrast may be stated in Gluck's own words :

“Your highness,” he wrote in the dedication of the score, “will have read the drama of *Paris and Helen*, and will have noticed that it does not provide the composer with those strong passions, those great images, those tragic situations which, in *Alceste*, move the spectators so deeply, and give such great opportunities for artistic effect. So that in this music one must not expect to find the same force and energy ; just as, in a picture representing a subject in full light, one would not expect the same effects of chiaroscuro, the same contrasts, as in a picture painted in half-light.

“Here we have not to do with a wife, who, on the point of losing her husband, finds courage to evoke

the infernal divinities in the depths of the tenebrous night, in a savage wood, and, in the anguish of her agony, trembles for the fate of her sons and cannot tear herself away from the husband she adores. Here we are dealing with a young lover, who stands in contrast with the strange humours of a proud and virtuous woman, and who, with all the art of ingenuous passion, ends by triumphing over her. I have had to seek truth of colouring in the different characters of the Phrygians and the Spartans, setting in parallel to the rudeness and savagery of the latter the delicacy and softness of the former.

“I have thought that, song in my opera being only a substitute for declamation, I ought, on occasion, to imitate the native rudeness of my heroine ; and I have also thought that, in order to preserve the character of this music, it would not be a fault sometimes to descend to the trivial.

“When one wishes to keep to the truth, one’s style must be adapted to the subject that is being treated ; the greatest beauties of melody and harmony become imperfections when they are out of place in the whole.

“I do not hope for my *Paris* a greater success than that of *Alceste*. As for my endeavour to lead musical composers towards a reform so greatly to be desired, I am sure to meet with the greatest obstacles ; but I will not cease to make new efforts to realise my design.” *

Thus it is evident, both from the words of Gluck

* *Barbedette*, pp. 76, 77 ; *Reissmann*, pp. 130, 131 ; *Marx*, i. 445, 446. *Barbedette* mistranslates grossly at

and from his treatment of the opera itself, with its strong contrasts between Phrygian luxury and Spartan plainness, how thoroughly pictorial his method was. He aimed at presenting to the ear, as if to the eye, two different pictures, painted in entirely different colours, the distinction between which constituted, for him, the greater part of the dramatist's function. As an opera, *Paris and Helen* has fallen into undeserved neglect; Gluck himself apparently did not care to tempt the French taste with it at the time he was giving *Alceste* and *Orfeo* to Paris as a preparation for his later works. The story of course is weak, and the one attenuated emotion is dragged out to an inordinate length; and further, the appearance of Pallas at the end of the opera and her prophesyings of future misfortune are essentially undramatic, seeing that these must find their fulfilment at some later time outside the scope of the opera itself. But as a purely lyrical work *Paris and Helen* stands in many respects even above *Orfeo* and *Alceste*. Its neglect has been inexcusable, and we may agree with Naumann that its restoration to public favour is only a matter of time. Nowhere else has Gluck written so freely and with such clear impulsion of genuine, heartfelt passion; and thus it has for our ears perhaps more charm than it had for the men of its own day. It stands nearer in motive and treatment to the lyrical fervour of our own

times, and his version of the above is full of liberties; for instance, by omitting "my" in the sentence, "song in my opera being only a substitute for declamation," he perverts the meaning entirely.

time. In his other works Gluck rarely loses himself in the pure artistic joy of musical expression ; almost the only instance in *Alceste*, for example, is that fine scene in the last act, where Admetus bursts into such a torrent of feverish eloquence. Here in *Paris and Helen* he continually sinks himself in his art, and loses his rigidity of method and his formalism of expression. Time after time he surrenders himself, like a modern poet or musician, to his purely lyrical impulses ; and it is with a surprised sense of artistic gladness, of freedom, of genuine æsthetic joy as distinguished from melodramatic satisfaction, that we listen to the free and sincere flow of melody and the expressive harmony. It was one more of the contradictions between Gluck's theory and his practice that where he occasionally relaxed the rigidity of some of his theories, his practice became proportionately finer. "When composing," he once said to Corancez, "I strive before all things to forget I am a musician ;" that is, he felt at times that if he was to follow inexorably the poetical groundwork given him by his librettist, he must check the musician's impulse to burst forth into sheer lyricism for its own sake. But here, in *Paris and Helen*, his work is actually finest and most enduring where he disregards his own precept about forgetting that he was a musician. Where he does regard it, as in the recitative and one or two of the arias, his music is already out of date and a dreary affliction to the ear ; when, on the contrary, he gives his musicianly impulses freer play, he writes music that may confidently be pronounced immortal. It was not that there was no truth and no æsthetic principle involved in his dictum

to forget that he was a musician ; every dramatic composer who genuinely strives to write dramatic music recognises the need of checking, at times, the impulse to develop the music unfettered along its own non-verbal lines ; but Gluck pushed the principle to an illogical extreme, making no allowance for the more exclusively æsthetic side of us that craves artistic enjoyment as well as dramatic enforcement, and that in the extreme case, would rather have a wrong thing exquisitely said than a right thing said crudely and uninvitingly. Thus Gluck's theory failed to correlate with his practice, and the situation was further complicated by the fact that there were really two Glucks—the Gluck of *Alceste* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*, typical of the eighteenth century in his ideas, and the Gluck of *Paris and Helen* and *Armida*, constantly reaching out to the Romanticism of our own century, losing his externalism of thought and emotion in exquisite suggestions of wider issues ; the motive force being not so much the bare dramatic insistence upon the verbal facts of the scene, as a purely lyrical delight in giving wing to his art. But Gluck was only a Romanticist at times, and it is probable that, standing alone in this respect as he did at that epoch, he would tend to have misgivings about these more entirely lyrical impulses, identifying them erroneously with the ways of the fatuous Italian school against which he so resolutely set his face ; and the more external, pictorial manner of the eighteenth century predominated in his transcriptions of emotion. It was this manner again which, being the accompaniment of those moods when he was calmer and more consciously master of himself, gave

its form and colour to his æsthetic theories. Hence their shortcomings in relation to modern art. They are almost entirely of the eighteenth century. Had he allowed for the more lyrical side of his nature, wherein existed Romanticism in embryo, had he judged the æsthetic problem of the opera in the light of this also, and incorporated it in his survey of the necessities of dramatic composition, he would have done even more for musical art than he has done. But we can but take the best a man can give us and be grateful for it ; and Gluck would have been superhuman had he so transcended the thought of his own time as to have based an æsthetic theory upon the dim stirrings of the newer impulses that only came to actual birth some thirty or forty years later.

In the same year which saw the production of *Paris and Helen* (1769), Gluck was called upon to furnish the necessary music for the festivals attending another royal marriage, the celebrations beginning in Vienna on the 27th June, and in Parma a couple of months later. Gluck provided the Court with three new works—a *Prologo delle Feste d' Apollo*, *L' Atto di Bauci e Filemone*, and *L' Atto d' Aristeo*, all in the old style, and of no more merit than such an occasion demanded. The second of these works contained a solo and chorus, the theme of which bears an extraordinary resemblance to that of the opening chorus of *Paris and Helen*—*Non sdegnare*.

In addition to these three compositions, a version of *Orfeo* was produced, the opera being compressed into one act. The singer cast for the part of Orpheus, at Parma, was the celebrated Millico, who is said to have

undertaken it with many misgivings ; closer study of the work, however, having roused his enthusiasm for it, he became one of the most devoted adherents of Gluck. Taking up his residence afterwards in Vienna, he became the personal friend and companion of the composer, and undertook the further vocal education of Gluck's young niece, Marianne, who was at this time a girl of about thirteen years of age.

Gluck had now won for himself a position of assured respect at Vienna. His fine house was the place of resort of all who were distinguished in art, music or letters, and an introduction to him had become an honour difficult to obtain. It was about this time that Dr. Burney visited him, procuring the introduction through Lord Stormont, the English ambassador at Vienna, who made use of the good offices of Gluck's friend, the Countess Thun. She had been, he says, "so good as to write a note to Gluck on my account, and he had returned, for *him*, a very civil answer ; for he is as formidable a character as Handel used to be ; a very dragon, of whom all are in fear. However, he had agreed to be visited in the afternoon ; and Lord Stormont and Countess Thun had extended their condescension as far as to promise to carry me to him He was so good-humoured as to perform almost his whole opera of *Alceste* ; many admirable things in a still later opera of his, called *Paride ed Elena* ; and in a French opera, from Racine's *Iphigenia*, which he has just composed. This last, though he had not as yet committed a note of it to paper, was so well digested in his head, and his retention is so wonderful, that he sang it nearly from the beginning to the end, with

as much readiness as if he had a fair score before him.

“His invention is, I believe, unequalled by any other composer who now lives, or has ever existed, particularly in dramatic painting and theatrical effects. He studies a poem a long time before he thinks of setting it. He considers well the relation which each part bears to the whole, the general cast of each character, and aspires more at satisfying the mind than flattering the ear. This is not only being a friend to poetry, but a poet himself; and if he had language sufficient, of any other kind than that of sound, in which to express his ideas, I am certain he would be a great poet; as it is, music, in his hands, is a most copious, nervous, elegant, and expressive language. It seldom happens that a single air of his operas can be taken out of its niche and sung singly with much effect; the whole is a chain, of which a detached, single link is but of small importance.

“If it is possible for the partisans of *old French music* to hear any other than that of Lully and Rameau with pleasure, it must be M. Gluck’s *Iphigénie*, in which he has so far accommodated himself to the national taste, style and language, as frequently to imitate and adopt them. The chief obstacles to his fame, perhaps, among his contracted judges, but which will be most acceptable to others, is that there is frequently *melody*, and always *measure*, in his music, though set to *French words*, and for a *serious French opera*.”*

* “Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces,” 1773, p. 255, etc. Burney is

It was at this time that Gluck did such a signal service to Salieri, then a young man about the age of twenty, by procuring the performance of his comic opera, *Le donne letterate*, written to words by Boccherini. The young Italian became one of his closest and most trusted friends.

Meanwhile Gluck was employed on some works more intimately connected with the thoughts of the Germany of his time than any to which he had formerly written music. He had taken a liking for the work of Klopstock, and published a collection of his *Oden und Lieder, beim Klavier zu singen, in Musik gesetzt von Gluck*. They are, says Marx,* "sehr declamatorisch," indicating once more the careful, perhaps too careful, attention he was paying to the verbal basis of his art. A more extensive undertaking was the setting of the *Hermannsschlacht*,† of the music to which, however, nothing is known. The choice of the work shows Gluck in a new light, that of German patriot.

wrong in saying that *Iphigenia in Aulis* was not yet written in score; it appears from a letter of Du Roullet to Dauvergne, about a month before Burney's visit to Gluck, that the opera was already completed.

* Marx, ii. 11.

† *Ibid.* ii. 12, etc.

CHAPTER IV

1769-1787

BUT the Alexander of the opera was now longing for a fresh kingdom to conquer. His eyes were turned on Paris, for it was there he believed a great success might be won. He was impelled to court the suffrages of the Parisians by the consideration that his work was really more after the French model than any other ; by a study of the works of Lully and Rameau, that convinced him of the similarities between his style and theirs, and of the certainty of success with the French public on that account ; and by the knowledge that Paris was at that time the centre of the intellectual world. Gluck at all times showed himself an adept in the art of obtaining his ends by skilfully working upon others, and with characteristic address he now began to create an impression in his own society that he bore a particular affection towards France and the French school, by making dexterously flattering references to Lully and other French favourites. The Comte d'Escherny narrates the manner in which Gluck worked through M. de Sevelinge :

“A certain M. de Sevelinge was recommended to me at Vienna in 1767. This M. de Sevelinge was a

melomaniac, and, without actually being a musician, was the soul of the music of Paris and the president of all the concerts of that time. I thought it well to do honour to the recommendation, and invited M. de Sevelinge several times to dine with me, inviting at the same time the chevalier Gluck. It need hardly be said that music was talked of. Gluck laid himself out to praise Lully most highly—praise which no doubt was merited in many ways, but which M. de Sevelinge did not expect from a composer of Italian operas. He (Gluck) praised in Lully a noble simplicity, a natural melody and dramatic intentions. He had studied Lully's scores, he said, and this study had been a revelation to him; through this he had perceived a real basis for pathetic and theatrical music, and the true genius of the opera, which only required to be developed and brought to perfection; and that if he should receive an invitation to work for the Opéra at Paris he would hope, by preserving the style of Lully and the French cantilena, to create in this manner the true *lyrical tragedy*.

“M. de Sevelinge, with his enthusiasm for music, was inflamed by these hopes of the chevalier Gluck, and I had no need to urge him to mention at Paris the desire and the projects of M. Gluck. M. de Sevelinge, on his return to Paris, did not fail to do so, and worked efficiently for M. Gluck.”*

Gluck, however, was setting further machinery at work to attain his ends. He had been for some time

* Le Comte d'Escherny, “Mélanges de Littérature, etc.,” Paris, 1811, II. 356–358. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 77, 78.

past on terms of special intimacy with the Bailli du Roulet, an amateur whom he had formerly met at Rome, and who was now attached to the French Embassy at Vienna; and a partnership had been formed between them similar to that which had previously existed between the composer and Calzabigi. They resolved to make an opera upon the subject of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, taking as their model the tragedy of Racine. Gluck set to work at once upon the words that were given him, and portions of the opera were performed privately with great success before a few of the men of taste connected with the Court.

Du Roulet now made overtures for the production of the new work in Paris, himself addressing the following letter to Dauvergne, at that time Director of the Académie Royale de Musique :

“VIENNA, 1 Aug. 1772.

“SIR,—The high esteem I have for your person and your distinguished talents, as well as for your well-known honourable character, has prompted me to inform you that the famous Gluck, who is celebrated throughout all Europe, has written a French opera, which he earnestly desires to have brought out in Paris.

“This great man, after having written more than forty Italian operas which have had the greatest success in every theatre where that language is admitted, is convinced, through thoughtful study of the ancients and moderns, and by profound meditation on his art, that the Italians in their dramatic creations have

departed from the true path ; that the French style is the true one for the musical drama ; that if this has not yet attained to perfection, it is less because of the talents of the French musicians, which are indeed estimable, than through the authors of the poems, who, not understanding the capacity of music, have in their compositions preferred wit to sentiment, gallantry to passion, the charm and colour of versification to the pathos of style and situation. After Gluck had communicated his ideas on these matters to a man of taste, talent and understanding, he received from the latter two Italian poems which he set to music. They were brought out in Parma, Milan, and Naples with incredible success, and wrought in Italy a revolution in operatic matters. One of these operas,* which was produced at Bologna last winter during Gluck's absence, drew more than twenty thousand spectators, and yielded to the management about 80,000 ducats.

“When Gluck returned to Vienna he became of the opinion that the Italian language was certainly fitted for that swarm of notes that goes by the name of ‘passages,’ but had nothing like the clearness and strength of the French tongue, so that this excellence in relation to vocalisation, which we are the first to concede, is pernicious in relation to truly dramatic music, since in the latter these ‘passages’ are inappropriate, or at any rate weaken the expression.

“According to these observations, Gluck was roused against the bold assertions of those of our famous writers who have dared to calumniate the French

* *Orfeo*.

tongue, saying that it could not lend itself to great musical creation. Nobody can be more competent to judge of this matter than Gluck, who has a complete knowledge of both languages; and although he speaks French with difficulty, he comprehends it thoroughly; he has made a particular study of it; he understands the *finesses*, especially the prosody of it; on the latter, indeed, he has made some profound observations. He has, besides, for a long time tried his talent in both languages and in various styles, and has been successful at a Court where both tongues are spoken fluently, although the French is preferred in society—a court the more capable of judgment in this field, as ears and taste are continually in use. Since he thought of these matters he had been desirous of having his opinions of the efficacy of the French language justified by actual proof, when an opportunity was afforded him by the receipt of the tragic opera *Iphigenia in Aulis*. He believed he had found in this work what he had been seeking.

“The author, or, to speak more correctly, the adapter of this poem, has followed with scrupulous exactness the poet Racine, whose tragedy he has wished to work up into an opera. To attain this end it was necessary to restrict the action somewhat and to eliminate the part of Eriphile. In the first act Calchas appears instead of the *confidant*, Arcas; in this way the unfolding of the situation has been changed, the subject has been simplified, and the action has received greater animation. The interest has not been lost by these changes; it is as complete as in Racine’s play. Since with the omission of the episode invented by Racine,

his conclusion of the poem could not be preserved in the opera, the end has been altered for the sake of a finer effect.

“The opera falls into three acts, a division which appears to me the best for a species of composition the action of which requires a rapid progression. In each act there has been arranged, without doing violence to the piece, a brilliant *divertissement*, in such wise that the action is thereby only heightened and completed. Care has also been taken to contrast the situations and characters in such a way that they afford a piquant and necessary variety, which will hold the spectator’s attention, and that the interest of the piece is fully maintained throughout. Without having recourse to machinery or incurring any great expense, it has been found possible to provide a noble and sumptuous display for the eye. I hardly think a new opera was ever staged in which so little expenditure was necessary and yet so fine a spectacle afforded. The author of the piece, the representation of which, including *divertissements*, should not take more than two hours and a half, has made it his duty to preserve the thoughts and even the verses of Racine, so far as was permitted in an opera which is not really a tragedy. Racine’s verses are welded in with care sufficient to prevent any mark of division being perceptible in the style of the whole. The choice of *Iphigenia in Aulis* appears to me so much the happier as the transcriber, by following Racine as far as possible, has secured the success of his undertaking; this being ample compensation for any loss of individuality.

“Gluck’s name would relieve me of the necessity

of saying much about the music to this opera, if the pleasure I had experienced at so many rehearsals would permit me to be silent. It appears to me that this great man has exhausted in his creation all the powers of art. Simple, natural song, supported throughout by a genuine and interesting expression and an enchanting melody ; an inexhaustible variety of ideas and devices ; the loftiest effects of harmony, whether in the portrayal of the terrible, the sublime or the tender ; a rapidly moving and at the same time noble and expressive recitative, similar to the best of the French recitatives ; the greatest versatility in the dance pieces, which are of a quite new kind, full of the most alluring freshness ; choruses, duets, terzets, quartets, all alike expressive, moving, and well declaimed with a scrupulous regard to the prosody ; in short, everything in this composition appears suitable to the taste of the French, while there is nothing in it which could seem to them peculiar. And all this is the work of the creative talent of a Gluck, in whom we everywhere see poet and musician at once, everywhere the man of genius and taste ; nothing is common, nothing neglected.

“ You know, sir, that I am no enthusiast, and that in all the wars over this new music I have preserved a decided impartiality ; and so I flatter myself that you will not be suspicious of the praise I have been moved to give to the music of *Iphigenia*. I feel myself the more certain of your assent as I am certain that nobody is more anxious for the progress of art than you. Have you not shown this by your own words, and by the approbation that has long been bestowed

on you by men themselves distinguished in music? As man of talent and as honest citizen, you will certainly not misjudge the advantage that lies in so famous a foreigner as the Chevalier Gluck thinking it worth his while to concern himself with our language, and defend it against the calumnious accusations of our own authors.

“Gluck only wishes to know whether the Académie de Musique can place so much reliance on his talent as to decide on producing his opera. He is ready to undertake the journey to France, but he must have a thorough assurance both that his opera will be produced, and at what time. If you have nothing fixed for the winter, for Lent, or for after Easter, I think you could not do better than arrange with him for one of these periods. Gluck has a pressing invitation to Naples for May next; for his part, he has not been willing to accept any engagement, and is determined to sacrifice all these advantages if he can be assured that his opera will be taken by your Academy, to whom I beg you to communicate this letter.”*

Dauvergne did not answer this letter immediately, but published it in the October (1772) number of the *Mercure de France*; and some months afterwards Gluck himself addressed to the editor of that journal a letter, which was published in the number for February 1773. It ran as follows:—

“Sir! Others might with justice reproach me, and I too would not spare myself, if, after seeing in your

* Marx, ii. 25–30.

October number a letter to one of the directors of the Académie de Musique on the subject of my opera *Iphigenia*, I did not hasten to thank the author of this letter for his high praise of me, and yet at the same time to point out that his friendship and his undoubtedly too great prepossession for me have led him to say too much, and that I myself am very far from believing that I have really deserved this flattering eulogium. Still more would I reproach myself if I permitted the invention of the new style of Italian opera, the attempts at which have been justified by success, to be attributed to me alone. It is to Signor Calzabigi that the chief praise is due, and if my music has found some approbation, I think I must gratefully recognise that I am indebted to him, since he it was who gave me the opportunity to pour forth the waters of my art. This writer, who is possessed of the greatest genius and talent, has, in his poems *Orpheus*, *Alceste*, and *Paris*, struck out a path that was little known to the Italians. These works are full of the happiest situations, of the most terrible and sublime traits, which serve the composer in the expression of deep passion, and in the writing of strong and seizing music; since however great the talent of the composer may be, he will only write indifferent music if the poet does not rouse in him that enthusiasm without which all the forms of art are dull and lifeless. The imitation of Nature is the aim both must set themselves, and it is this I have sought to attain. Simply and naturally my music always strives, as far as it is possible to me, after the highest power of expression and the strengthening of the declamation in the

poetry. On that account I never employ trills, passages and cadenzas, with which the Italians are so liberal. Your tongue offers me nothing in that respect. Born in Germany, and reasonably conversant with the French and Italian languages through diligent study, I do not believe myself capable of appreciating the delicate shades which might make one preferable to the other, and I think every stranger should abstain from judging between them; but I think it is permitted me to say that the language which will always suit me best will be that in which the poet furnishes me with the most varied means of expressing the passions. This is the advantage I believe I have found in the words of the opera of *Iphigenia*, the poetry of which appears to me to have all the energy proper to inspire me with fine music. Although I have never been in the position of offering my works to any theatre, I cannot be displeased with the author of the letter to one of the directors for having proposed my *Iphigenia* to your Académie de Musique. I avow that I would be glad to see it produced in Paris, because by its effect, and with the aid and the advice of the famous M. Rousseau of Geneva, we may perhaps together be able, by seeking a melody noble, sensible and natural, together with a declamation following exactly the prosody of each language and the character of each people, to find the means to effect my purpose of producing a music appealing to men of all nations, and eliminating the ridiculous distinctions of national music. The study I have made of this great man's writings on music—among others the letter in which he has analysed the monologue in

Lully's *Armida*—proves the depth of his knowledge and the reliability of his taste, and has filled me with admiration. I have been convinced that if he had chosen to apply himself to the exercise of this art, he would have been able to realise the prodigious effects which the ancients have attributed to music. I am delighted to take this opportunity to render him publicly the eulogies which I believe he merits.”*

Dauvergne now entered into correspondence with Du Roulet, who sent him the first act of the new opera. The directors were favourably impressed with it, and wrote to the attaché: “If the Chevalier Gluck is willing to pledge himself to write six operas of this kind for the Academy, well and good; otherwise it cannot be played, for such a work as this is calculated to kill all the old French operas;” which was undoubtedly true. Evidently nothing more was to be done in this direction, and in a moment of happy inspiration Gluck remembered Marie Antoinette, who had formerly been his pupil. The young princess used her influence to have the work brought out, and in the end an invitation was sent to Gluck to come to Paris and attend personally to its production.

The libretto of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, as appears from the above-quoted letter of Du Roulet, is based on the tragedy of Racine; this in its turn was founded on the play of Euripides. In the Greek the story is as follows:—In the course of their campaign against Troy, to avenge the rape of Helen by Paris from her husband Menelaus, the Greeks find themselves sud-

* Marx, ii. 31-33.

denly becalmed at Aulis. Consulting the oracle, they are informed by Calchas, the priest, that favourable winds will spring up again only on condition that Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, is sacrificed to Diana. Thereupon Agamemnon is urged by Menelaus and Ulysses to send for Iphigenia, giving as his motive his desire to see her wedded to Achilles; and the king yields to their wishes, being impelled by the desire of glory and of fulfilling the pledges he had made when undertaking the expedition. When left to himself, however, Agamemnon is overcome by his affection for his daughter, and in agony lest she should obey the command of his letter and come to Aulis to meet her death, he secretly sends an attendant to Clytemnestra, his wife, bidding her defer her coming and that of Iphigenia, as the nuptials of his daughter have been put off to a later time. This letter, however, is intercepted by Menelaus, who upbraids Agamemnon for his perfidy, and the customary Euripedean scene ensues in which the two characters abuse each other roundly. The warning message having miscarried, Clytemnestra and Iphigenia arrive in the Grecian camp and are greeted sadly by Agamemnon. Achilles, coming to the house of Agamemnon to inquire of him why the Greek host does not set sail for Ilium, meets Clytemnestra, who, accosting him as the affianced of Iphigenia, thus acquaints him for the first time with the manner in which Agamemnon has made use of his name to draw his daughter thither. During their mutual questionings and explanations, however, the same attendant enters who had been entrusted with the note inter-

cepted by Menelaus; he, being an old servant of Clytemnestra, tells her of the plot against the life of Iphigenia, and of Agamemnon's strategies, first to bring her to Aulis and then to avert her coming. Clytemnestra is overcome with grief and despair, while Achilles swears to save her daughter from the sacrifice. Agamemnon soon learns that his wife and child are acquainted with all the train of circumstances, but declares himself unable to fight against the will of the gods; while Iphigenia, after a moment's weakness, proffers herself calmly and bravely for the sacrifice, in spite of the entreaties and protestations of Clytemnestra and Achilles. She goes forth, indeed, to the altar; soon after, word is brought to Clytemnestra that a miracle had happened. Just at the moment when the victim's neck was bared, and Calchas had raised the sacred knife to strike, Iphigenia was taken from their presence, and in her stead was seen panting

“a hind of largest bulk,
In form excelling; with its sprouting blood
Much was the altar of the goddess dewed;”

and the gods being thus appeased, the winds spring up again and the Greeks make their way forth to Troy.

Racine altered this scheme of the drama materially. In one point he improved it, from the modern dramatic point of view, by making Achilles the lover of Iphigenia, and ardently expecting her coming; instead of being, as in Euripides, merely a counter in the hands of Agamemnon. But Racine brought in the inevitable *confidant* and *confidante*; the “attendant” in the Greek play becomes Arcas, and a further

domestic, Eurybates, is introduced; Clytemnestra also is enriched with a *confidante*, Ægina. He further thought to give additional interest to the drama by introducing a totally new character, Eriphile, with, of course, her *confidante*, Doris. This Eriphile was the daughter of that rather abandoned lady, Helen, by Theseus; and Racine supposes her to have been captured in war by Achilles, brought up in ignorance of her true name and birth, and delivered as a companion to Iphigenia. In this condition she is a prey to two emotions—the desire to learn her name and her parents, and, of course, a secret passion for Achilles. With the exception of the scenes in which Eriphile and Doris appear, Racine conducts the drama on much the same lines as those of Euripides; allowing for the fact that here Achilles is the expectant lover of Iphigenia. He makes Agamemnon, however, scheme more for the deliverance of his daughter by sending her and Clytemnestra out of the camp, but his design is frustrated by Eriphile, who informs the soldiers of what is passing. When the time comes for the sacrifice, Achilles and Patroclus beat back those who would slay Iphigenia, and suddenly Calchas learns from the oracle that there is present in the crowd one of the blood of Helen, who must be immolated for Iphigenia. Eriphile does not wait for the attack, but plunges the sacrificial knife into her own bosom. She plays the part of “the hind of largest bulk” of Euripides; while Iphigenia, instead of being translated by Diana into the clouds and deposited at Tauris, is happily wedded to Achilles.

This is the form of the story upon which Du

Roulet worked, though, as he says in his letter to Dauvergne, he omits the part of Eriphile entirely.

The overture to *Iphigenia in Aulis* is perhaps the most elaborate of Gluck's instrumental compositions, and at the same time the most successful. It begins at once with a mournful theme (*andante*) which had formerly figured in *Telemacco*. This is succeeded by a *grave* passage, leading into an *allegro maestoso*, which after some heavy octave passages for the strings leads into the dolorous subject in G minor, with its contest between the flute and the oboe—altogether a passage of profound dramatic characterisation. The rest of the overture follows the same general plan, each of the themes being reiterated. It has no formal ending,* but leads at once into the opening air of Agamemnon, O "pitiless Diana, in vain dost thou command this fearful sacrifice," in which the first theme of the overture appears again. He has sent Arcas to turn back Clytemnestra and her daughter, and declares his anguish at the thought of sacrificing Iphigenia.

He is interrupted by a chorus of Greeks, demanding of Calchas the reason of the god's displeasure. Calchas, without replying to them, bemoans the awful nature of the sacrifice, and inquires of the gods if no other victim will content them; he is finally joined by Agamemnon in a short duet, "O terrible divinity, have mercy upon us." The Greeks burst into a ferocious chorus, "Name us the victim, and at once we will slay him," ending with a solemn and impressive appeal

* Endings for concert purposes have been written by various composers, the best being that of Wagner.

to the gods to be propitious. Calchas dismisses them with the assurance that a victim shall be found that day.

Left alone with Agamemnon, Calchas urges him to bow to the will of the gods. "Can they wish a father to bring his daughter to the sacrifice?" asks Agamemnon, and gives agonised expression to his grief; the air, broad and noble, is accompanied by strings *pianissimo*, while alternate long notes for the oboe and bassoon form a kind of wailing comment on his words. Finally he avers he will not obey the gods, and on being asked by Calchas whether he intends to break the oath he has taken, he replies that all he had promised was to give his daughter up to death if she should set foot in Aulis—secretly relying on the clandestine message he had sent to warn her against the journey. But this of course has miscarried, and just as Calchas is replying to him, shouts are heard in the camp, announcing the arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia. Solemnly the priest admonishes him that he is nothing to the gods, and that he must bend before them; and the sorrowful king inclines his head in resignation. The chorus add new poignancy to his grief by singing of the beauties of his wife and daughter, and his happiness in possessing them.

Clytemnestra goes in to seek the king, leaving Iphigenia to receive the homage of the Greeks in the customary ballets, and a chorus in praise of her beauty; Iphigenia herself interjecting a short lament that Achilles does not appear to gladden her eyes. But Clytemnestra hastily re-enters. Agamemnon, with the purpose of getting her and her daughter away from

Aulis, has told her that Achilles has proved false ; and in a magnificent aria she calls upon Iphigenia to cast from her heart every remembrance of her betrayer—an aria of clear, strong, sinewy passion that is all the more powerful by contrast with the somewhat weak ballet music and chorus that went immediately before. Iphigenia bewails her fate in an aria now tender, now passionate, those portions of it being finest where anger against Achilles bursts forth. But at this moment Achilles himself enters, in transports at the sight of his betrothed. “Can I believe my eyes?” he asks. “Thou in Aulis, my princess!” Iphigenia becomes immediately as freezing as a *grande dame*. “Whatever it may be that brings me here, at least I cannot reproach myself with being here to seek Achilles.” Explanations and reproaches follow, the music being uninterruptedly expressive ; and the final duet, in which they are reconciled, has in it some anticipatory suggestions of the manner of Mozart or Weber.

The second act begins with the congratulations of the chorus to Iphigenia, whose heart, however, is ill at ease. Achilles has heard of Agamemnon’s report that he was false, and Iphigenia dreads an encounter between them. Clytemnestra urges her to rejoice on her wedding-day, and Achilles himself, after introducing Patroclus to her in courtly wise, leads a chorus in her praise—the chorus “Sing and celebrate your queen,” which was applied during the performance of the opera to Marie Antoinette ; after which the usual congratulatory ballets and so forth proceed. Just, however, as Achilles is about to lead Iphigenia to the altar, Arcas, the attendant, steps forth and discloses

the purpose of Agamemnon to have slain her when she arrives there. All are horror-stricken ; the Thesalians swear they will not permit the sacrifice, while Clytemnestra, clinging to Achilles, implores him to save her daughter. This Achilles promises to do, but Iphigenia somewhat coldly begs him to remember that Agamemnon is still her father, though condemned by fate to slay her.

In the following scene Achilles meets Agamemnon, and the two abuse each other in the orthodox style, Achilles finally declaring that they shall only reach Iphigenia through him. When he has gone, Agamemnon, in a fine recitative and aria, hovers in anguish between love for his daughter and fear of the gods ; in the end he sends Arcas to Clytemnestra with orders to proceed with Iphigenia to Mycenæ at once.

In the third act the Greeks are clamouring for their victim. Achilles implores Iphigenia to fly with him, but she entreats him to leave her, assuring him of the uselessness of the attempt, yet protesting her eternal love. Her aria "Farewell!" is one of the most perfect emotional utterances of the eighteenth century ; in it can be seen the gradual amalgamation that was taking place in Gluck's mind between the two styles of *Alceste* and *Paris and Helen*.

Achilles swears to strike down the priest himself at the altar, and to slay Agamemnon if he comes in his way. This is the aria that fired the audience to such enthusiasm at the first performance ; the officers, we are told, rose in their seats, grasping their words, and scarcely able to refrain from rushing on the stage.

Then follows a scene between Iphigenia and Clytemnestra, followed by another chorus of the Greeks demanding the sacrifice. Iphigenia is taken off; Clytemnestra, held back by the attendants, bursts into a passionate recitative, seeing in imagination her daughter under the knife of the priest; her following aria, "Jove, dart thy lightning," is in some respects the most modern expression ever attained by Gluck. It is perfect in feeling and in form, and might have come from the pen of Mendelssohn himself.

A beautiful hymn of the Greeks is now heard, imploring the favour of the gods and the acceptance of the sacrifice; it is cut short by the sudden onslaught of Achilles and the Thessalians. For a time the contest rages between the two parties; then comes the inevitable anti-climax of eighteenth-century opera. Calchas bids the combatants cease; the gods are satisfied, the altar is consumed, and Iphigenia is restored to Achilles and her parents. There follow a quartett and chorus, and the usual ballets. It is noticeable that Gluck has repeated in the ballet, though in a slightly changed form, the exquisite *amabile moderato* from *Paris and Helen*. A Greek woman lifts up her voice to exhort the warriors to set sail for Troy, there to achieve greatness; the melody is that of *Donzelle semplice* in *Paris and Helen*. There, however, it is appropriate and pathetic; here it is utterly out of place. The opera ends with an unharmonised chorus of Greeks.

Fine as *Iphigenia in Aulis* is in parts, it is unsatisfactory as a whole. It is true that Gluck here is

working on a larger canvas than he had yet attempted. In *Orfeo* the dramatic interest was small ; there were only two real personages and only one emotion. Exactly the same criticism applies to *Paris and Helen*, allowing for the difference in the phase of love that is there under treatment. In *Alceste*, the strongest of his operas up to this time, there were similarly only two real characters and only one real emotion ; that of a wife for a dying husband and of a husband for a dying wife. Much of the space of the canvas in both *Orfeo* and *Alceste* is taken up with representations of the unearthly—scenes that are in their very essence incapable of psychological treatment in the sense in which that phrase applies to scenes of human life and character ; they are simply designed to add pictorially to the general effect of terror in a scene. But in *Iphigenia in Aulis* the supernatural is wholly eliminated, if we except the very small part it plays in the final announcement of Calchas ; and even in that case it only enters by way of narrative ; it plays no pictorial part itself, as do the Furies and Shades in *Orfeo*, or the oracle and powers of the under-world in *Alceste*. Nor are there in *Iphigenia in Aulis* any merely abstract or mythological persons, such as Cupid in *Orfeo*, Pallas and Erasto in *Paris*, Hercules and Apollo in *Alceste*. Here all the characters are actual human beings, and Gluck has a greater variety of them to study than in any other opera—Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Achilles, and Calchas, excluding such minor personages as Arcas and Patroclus ; besides which, the choruses of Greeks and Thessalians are so treated as to become additional

acting characters in the drama. Moreover, the story itself is more intrinsically interesting, more varied, more moving, more human, than any he had previously treated. As there are more personages, there are more states of mind to be depicted, and the psychological scope of the drama is proportionally widened.

Yet in spite of all this, and in spite of the many magnificent strokes of genius in it, *Iphigenia in Aulis* is disappointing as a whole. Gluck too rarely rises above and out of himself; where he does so, as in many passages in his previous operas, his work is invariably finest and most convincing. But here the opportunities of this forgetfulness of self are not frequent. Now and again, as in his treatment of the mental anguish of Agamemnon, the rage and fury of Clytemnestra, and the passion of Achilles, he is firm and clear and touching; but he cannot maintain this high level throughout the opera, in all probability because of the frigid tone of the libretto. The stimulus to pure and lovely lyricism that had at times been given him by the really poetical words of Calzabigi, was absent from the cold and formal libretto of Du Roullet. What could any composer do, for instance, with such words as these?—

IPH. Ah! you essay in vain to repress my alarm; Achilles has heard that the king, my father, thinks that he my charms despises, meaning to break his faith. His honour resents the suspicion, and to him, it appears, mortal offence is given. I have read in his eyes all the anger he feels, and, as you know, very proud is my father. The two have met this very hour.

A WOMAN IN THE CROWD. See the fierce raging lion, untamed, roaring with anger, by his love overcome, crouching low on the ground: submissive, full of sighs, scarcely his eyes uplifting, he caresses the godlike hand that gave the wound.

CHORUS OF WOMEN. Be sad no more, &c.

IPH. You try in vain to bring my alarms to an end, for love has only feeble weapons where a hero thinks his honour is hurt.*

A libretto like this accounts for many of the shortcomings of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, though not for all. There are scenes where Gluck is inexpressibly dull and tedious, scenes unlit by the faintest ray of passion or beauty—where yet existed in the libretto the possibility of finer treatment. And it is noticeable that some of the best and some of the worst specimens of Gluck's aria-writing here exist side by side. There are moments when he has surpassed himself, when we catch the breath in amazement at some fine stroke of art; there are other moments when our senses fall asleep under the heavy burden of dull and meaningless sequences of notes. While the melody thus hovers

* I quote these passages from the really admirable translation of the Rev. J. Troutbeck, in Novello's edition of the opera. I have tried, but ineffectually, to set forth the woman's speech, "See the fierce lion," in rhyme and rhythm, as in the French text, *colère, altière—terrassé, blessé*; but although there is evidently a most courageous attempt at rhyme in "ground, wound," the passage defies all ordinary rules of prosody, and I am reluctantly compelled to print it as prose, with profound apologies to the translator.

between excellence and mediocrity, the recitative is almost everywhere true and dramatic. Gluck's command of recitative as a dramatic instrument is here almost at its height; and at times it rises to the rank of lyric beauty. Perhaps the finest scenes, after those descriptive of the torment of Agamemnon's mind, are those two in which Clytemnestra bursts forth in passionate anger, first against Achilles, then against the murderers of her daughter. Gluck too rarely worked himself up to such self-abandonment as this. Wherever he does so, as here and in the aria of Admetus in the third act of *Alceste*, he is almost unapproachable. And exactly here, where he is finest and strongest, his theory of "forgetting that he was a musician" breaks down. It is where he *is* a musician that he is most interesting and most beautiful; where he forgets that he is a musician he is too often dull and turgid.

Gluck's position in Paris was at first not an easy one. As yet his music was unknown there, and the amateurs of music, ever inclined to take sides in matters of art, were preparing for a new war, similar to that of the Buffonists and Anti-Buffonists—which had been occasioned by the advent of an Italian troupe in 1752, performing some of the works of the Italian *buffo* order, such as the *Serva Padrona* of Pergolese. The immense contrast between the free and open melody of these operas and the style of Lully and Rameau, that necessarily seemed crabbed and rigid in comparison, had set all Paris by the ears, the Buffonists swearing by Pergolese, and the Italians, the Anti-

Buffonists, making a virtue of dullness in the sacred cause of patriotism, remaining faithful to the French composers. Immediately upon Gluck's advent into Paris, the musical world began to range itself for or against him. Unfortunately for a clear understanding of things, Gluck, though he was not of the school of Italy, certainly was not altogether of the school of France; which was unfortunate, as it complicated what might have been a very clear state of affairs, making nicely for a settled antithesis between Italian music and French, and puzzled many amiable and enthusiastic heads that would have been glad to range themselves on one side or the other, had they only been certain of their side. However, two parties were soon formed—Gluckists and Anti-Gluckists; and it must have been a consolation for the latter party to cast the skin of negativism and wriggle forth as something positive when the later advent of Piccinni as antagonist to Gluck gave them the opportunity to style themselves Piccinnists. Such is the consolatory virtue of names.

The consternation of the old playgoers was great at the appearance of Gluck upon the scene. He saw that it would be necessary to make influential friends in the French capital, and to conciliate some of the more powerful among the writers who might range themselves against him. He began with Rousseau, who was well known as a persistent opponent of French music and an advocate of the Italian, and whose main thesis in his *Lettre sur la musique française* (1753) had been that France could never have a genuine music of her own, because her

language was fundamentally unfit for it and opposed to everything musical. Rousseau, of course, was not easily accessible, but Gluck managed to procure an introduction to him through Corancez, who was at one time part director of the *Journal de Paris*. He afterwards narrated a conversation between Rousseau and himself relative to the German composer :

“Rousseau said to me one day (it was before the initial performance of Gluck's first work), ‘I have seen many Italian scores in which there are some fine dramatic pieces. M. Gluck alone appears to set himself the aim of giving to each of his personages the style that is proper to them ; but what I think most admirable is that this style, once adopted, never changes. His scrupulousness in this respect has even made him commit an anachronism in his opera *Paris and Helen*.’ Astonished at this expression, I asked him to explain himself. ‘M. Gluck,’ he continued, ‘has expended upon Paris, in the greatest profusion, all the brilliance and softness of which music is capable ; to Helen, on the contrary, he has given a certain austerity that never abandons her, even in the expression of her passion for Paris. This difference doubtless arises from the fact that Paris was a Phrygian and Helen a Spartan ; but Gluck has forgotten the epoch in which they lived. Sparta only received the severity of its manners and language from the laws of Lycurgus, and Lycurgus belonged to a much later age than Helen.’ I repeated this observation to M. Gluck. ‘How happy should I be,’ he replied, ‘if any number of the spectators could understand and follow me in this way ; pray tell

M. Rousseau that I am grateful to him for the attention he is good enough to bestow on my works ; observe to him, however, that I have not committed the anachronism of which he accuses me. If I have given a severe style to Helen, it is not because she was a Spartan, but because Homer himself gives her this character ; tell him, in short, to sum the matter up in a word, that she was esteemed by Hector.’”*

Such was the remarkable brilliance of operatic criticism in the eighteenth century. One hardly knows whether Rousseau or Gluck was the more absurd.

Affairs between these two, however, came to a rather strange pass. Gluck had sent the philosopher a score of the Italian *Alceste* for his perusal and the expression of his opinion. In spite of his musical attainments, the study of the score was probably no easy matter for Rousseau. He himself writes : “ M. Gluck pressed me so much that I was unable to refuse him this favour, although it was as fatiguing for me as it was useless for him.” But Gluck brought matters to a head by suddenly taking the score away from him. “ I had commenced the task,” writes Rousseau to Dr. Burney, “ when he withdrew his opera, without asking me for my remarks, which were only just commenced, and the indecipherable confusion of which made it impossible for me to send them to him.”

Gluck found the task of producing *Iphigenia* harder than any he had yet undertaken. Nothing was in a condition to please him ; the orchestra, singers, chorus, ballet, all were inefficient, and had to go

* *Journal de Paris*, No. 231, p. 398, 18th Aug. 1788. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 86, 87.

through a course of the most rigorous training under his iron hand and watchful eye. The state of the Paris opera at this time was almost incredible. "Disorder, abuse, caprice, routine, and inertia were despotically enthroned there, without a protest from any one. If reform was urgent, so many people were interested in the *statu quo* that there was scarcely any hope of obtaining from the administration and from this ignorant and prejudiced crowd any improvement that was at all practical. In the midst of all this pomp and expenditure was a carelessness, an anarchy, a disorder past all credence. Actors and actresses pushed indecency to such a point as to appear outside the scenes, the latter in white camisoles with *une culotte d'argent* and a band across the forehead, the former in a simple dressing-gown. It was not a rare thing, while the foreground was occupied by Jupiter or Theseus, to see, through the scenery, the dancers moving and fluttering about, they having actually chosen the background of the stage to practise their steps and make their *jetés-battus*. Five or six years before this time, masks were still in use, and the choruses drew themselves up in a row, the two sexes carefully sorted out, impassible, without a gesture, like grenadiers on duty. . . . However, at the time of the coronation of Louis XV., almost all the actors of the opera had been sent to Villers-Cotterets and Chantilly, and it had been necessary to substitute for the usual choruses other provisional ones, acting without singing, while musicians who could not or would not appear in public sang in the wings."* He was

* Desnoiresterres, pp. 89, 90.

confronted with similar difficulties in the case of the orchestra, which had been compared to "an old coach drawn by consumptive horses, and led by one deaf from his birth." The "Lettre de l'amant de Julie à Madame d'Orbe," in Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*, (lettre xxiii., part ii.) gives an equally bad picture of the condition of the singers: "I will not speak to you of this music; you know it; but what you can have no idea of are the frightful cries, the long roars with which the theatre resounds during the performance. One sees the actresses, almost in convulsions, violently tear the yelps out of their lungs, their fists clenched against the chest, the head thrown back, the face inflamed, the veins swollen, the stomach heaving; one does not know which is the more disagreeably affected, the eye or the ear; their exertions give as much suffering to those who see them as their singing does to those who hear them; and the astonishing thing is that the spectators applaud hardly any thing but these howlings. By the way they beat their hands together one would take them for deaf people, delighted to catch a piercing tone here and there"

The Iphigenia in Gluck's opera was the celebrated Sophie Arnould, a fine dramatic soprano, though with a tendency to sing out of tune. The Achilles was Legros, who made up in voice what he lacked in intelligence. The thorn in Gluck's side was Larrivée, to whom had been entrusted the part of Agamemnon. Once the composer was forced to tell him that he seemed to have no comprehension of his part, and to be unable to enter into the spirit of it. "Wait till I

get into my costume," said Larrivée; "you won't recognise me then." At a later rehearsal the singer reappeared in his costume, but his interpretation remained the same. "Oh, Larrivée, Larrivée!" cried Gluck; "I recognise you!"

With the ballet Gluck's troubles began again. He found himself compelled to struggle with the stupidity of Vestris—*le diou de la danse*—who once said that there were only three great men in Europe—Frederick II., Voltaire and himself. Full as the opera was of ballets, Vestris wanted yet another, in which to introduce his son. Gluck peremptorily refused. "Quoi!" stammered Vestris; "moi! le diou de la danse!" "If you are the god of the dance, monsieur," replied Gluck; "dance in heaven, not in my opera." The great man lamented that there was no *chaconne*; at the end of the opera. "A *chaconne*!" said Gluck, "whenever did the Greeks dance a *chaconne*!" "Did they not?" was the compassionate reply of Vestris; "then so much the worse for them!"

More than once the composer threatened to withdraw his opera and proceed to Vienna; and Marie Antoinette had to exercise her power to remove the difficulties from his path. Finally, the performance was fixed for 13th April 1774; but almost at the last moment Legros announced that he was too ill to appear. Gluck demanded the postponement of the opera, but as every arrangement had been made, and the Royal family itself was to be present, it was attempted to induce him to allow another singer to take the place of Legros. It was impossible, however, to shake Gluck's resolution; he swore he would rather

throw his work into the fire than submit to see it murdered by an inferior rendering ; and the opposition was forced to give in. The opera was at length produced on the 19th April with great success, though parts of it pleased better than the whole ; the overture was encored. The opera grew in favour with each repetition. No better proof could be given of its popularity than the fact that the ladies began to wear “ a head dress in the form of a coronet of black flowers surmounted by the crescent of Diana, whence escaped a kind of veil that covered the back of the head ; it was called *à l'Iphigénie.*” *

It is unnecessary to quote here all the letters and articles by the littérateurs of the day on *Iphigenia in Aulis* ; a fair selection of them will be found in Desnoiresterres and in the second volume of Marx. One quotation, however, may be given from Corancez, as it illustrates Gluck's own ideas of dramatic composition :

“ One day the passage, *Peuvent-ils ordonner qu'un père*, from *Iphigenia in Aulis*, was being sung at my house. I perceived that in the line *je n'obéirai point à cet ordre inhumain* there was a long note to *je* the first time it occurred, and a short note when it was repeated. I observed to M. Gluck that this long note had been unpleasant to me in the melody, and I was the more astonished at his employing it the first time seeing that he had dispensed with it afterwards, he himself apparently not making much of it.

“ ‘ This long note,’ he said, ‘ which has displeased

* Desnoiresterres, p. 100.

you so much at your own house—did it equally displease you in the theatre?’ I answered ‘No.’ ‘Well,’ he added, ‘I should be contented with that reply, and as you will not always have me near you, I beg you to look at the matter in the same way whenever such a case occurs again. When I have succeeded in the theatre I have done what I set myself to do ; it can matter little to me, and I assure you it affects me very little, to create a pleasant effect in a drawing-room or at a concert. If you have often noticed that good concert-music has no effect in a theatre, it is surely in the nature of things that good theatrical music should frequently be unsuccessful in a concert-room. Your question resembles that of a man who, being in the high gallery of the dome of the Invalides, should cry out to the painter below, “Sir, what was your intention here—a nose, an arm ? it looks like neither.” The painter would with more reason say to him, “Sir, come down here and judge for yourself.”

“‘I ought to add, however, that I had very good reasons not only for setting a long note to *je* the first time Agamemnon pronounces it, but also for suppressing it each time it is repeated. Remember that the prince is between the two most potent of all forces—nature and religion ; nature finally gains the victory, but before articulating this terrible word of disobedience to the gods he must hesitate ; my long note marks this hesitation ; but when once this word has been spoken, let him repeat it as often as he may, there will no longer be hesitation ; the long note would in that case be only an error in prosody.’

“I also complained to M. Gluck that in this same opera, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the chorus of soldiers who advance so many times to demand loudly that the victim be given up to them, not only has nothing striking in itself, in point of melody, but that it is repeated each time, note for note, although variety seems so necessary.

“‘These soldiers,’ he replied, ‘have quitted all they hold most dear—their country, their wives, their children—in the sole hope of pillaging Troy. The calm surprises them in the middle of their progress and keeps them bound in the port of Aulis. A contrary wind would be less harmful, since then they could at least return home. Suppose,’ he added, ‘that some great province is in famine. The citizens gather together in crowds and seek the chief of the province, who appears on the balcony: “My children, what do you wish!” All reply at once, “Bread!” “My friends, we are” “Bread! bread!” To everything he says they will answer “Bread!” Not only will they utter nothing but this laconic word, but they will utter it always in the same tone, because the great passions have only one accent. Here the soldiers demand their victim; all the circumstances count for nothing in their eyes; they see only Troy or else a return to their own country; so they ought only to employ the same words and always with the same accent. I might perhaps have written something more beautiful from a musical point of view, and varied it so as to please your ears; but in that case I would only have been a musician and would have been untrue to nature, which I must never abandon. Do

not imagine, however, that in that case you would have had the additional pleasure of hearing a fine piece of music ; I assure you to the contrary ; for a beauty out of place has not only the disadvantage of missing a great part of its effect, but it is really pernicious, because it distracts the spectator, who is no longer in the necessary disposition for following the dramatic action with any interest.’

“ My absolute ignorance of the art of music did not repel M. Gluck ; I did not fear to interrogate him, especially when it was a question of criticising some apparent faults. His replies had always an air of simplicity and truth which only made my esteem for his person increase day by day.

“ I begged him afterwards to explain to me why the number in *Iphigenia*, describing the anger of Achilles, sent a shiver through me, and transported me, so to speak, into the situation of the hero himself : while if I sang it myself, so far from finding anything terrible or menacing in it, I only saw in it a melody pleasing to the ear.

“ ‘ You must recognise before all,’ he said, ‘ that music is a very limited art, especially in that part of it which is called *melody*. You would seek in vain, in the combination of notes which compose the air, a character proper to certain passions ; it does not exist. The composer has the resource of harmony, but that is frequently insufficient. In the piece you speak of, all my magic consists in the nature of the air which precedes it, and in the choice of the instruments that accompany it. For some time previously you have heard nothing but the tender regrets of Iphigenia and

her adieux to Achilles ; the flutes and the mournful tones of the horns play the greatest part there. It is no wonder that when your ears, after being thus lulled to rest, are suddenly struck with the sharp tone of all the military instruments together, an extraordinary effect is produced on you—an effect, indeed, which it was my aim to produce, but which yet depends principally upon a purely physical sensation’.”*

Iphigenia in Aulis, besides the honour and adulation it brought Gluck, benefited him also in a more material sense. In Vienna, whereto reports of his triumphs had spread, Maria Theresa made him her *Kammer-Kompositeur* ; in Paris he received 20,000 livres for this and for each succeeding opera. When he had produced three operas for the French stage he was to have a pension of 1000 livres, which was to be increased to 1500 livres after the fourth and 2000 after the sixth.

He at once set to work upon his second opera, having resolved to produce *Orfeo* upon the Parisian stage. Several alterations were necessary ; as there were no *castrati* in Paris, the title-part had to be recast for a counter-tenor instead of a contralto, and, as Fétis remarks, it thereby lost “that character of profound melancholy that suited the subject so well.” This change, by altering the key throughout the music of Orpheus, necessarily altered the meaning and the impression throughout. In the opening chorus, the effect of the exquisite call “Eurydice !” was utterly

* *Journal de Paris*, No. 234, 21st August 1788, pp. 1009, 1010. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 101-104.

spoiled. The beautiful aria in F, in the first act, was transposed into C, and *Che farò*, conversely, from C into F; while the chorus of the Furies in the second act was altered from C minor into D minor. Moreover, as Legros refused to sing the part of Orpheus unless he had the opportunity of making a brilliant exit in the first act, a new aria was inserted for him—*L'espoir renaît dans mon âme*—by a composer named Bertoni.

Orphée et Eurydice was produced 2nd August 1774, and met with a success surpassing even that of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, by reason of its simpler and more emotional character. The journals, letters, and memoirs of the time are filled with eulogies of it. Corancez, Rousseau, Voltaire, Mlle. de Lespinasse, all recorded their opinions in enthusiastic language.* “I know nothing more perfect,” says the *Journal de Paris* in 1788, quoting Rousseau, “in what is called congruity, than the *ensemble* of the Elysian Fields in the opera *Orphée*. Throughout there is the enjoyment of pure and calm happiness, but with such a character of equality that there is not a trait, either in the song or in the ballet, that in any way rises into exaggeration.’ Praise so well merited in the mouth of a man like Rousseau appeared to me too flattering to be kept from the chevalier Gluck. ‘My lesson,’ he replied, is written in the picture Eurydice makes of the abode of the blest :

* See *Journal de Paris*, No. 231, 18th Aug. 1788. Rousseau, “*Œuvres*,” xii. 413-420, etc.; Voltaire, “*Œuvres—Lettre au Chevalier de Lisle*,” 27th May, 1774, etc.; “*Lettres de Mile. Lespinasse*,” p. 148, etc.

ich habe selbige durch diese gelegenheit wegen Ersparung der Postspesen ihnen geschickt, die anmerkungen habe ich müssen wecklassen, weilen ich nicht wüste, mich auszurücken, wie ich Es Verlangte, ich glaube, Es würde ihnen Eben so schwer vorkommen, wan sie sollten jemanden durch Brieffe belehren, wie, und mit was vor Einen ausdruck Er ihnen Messias zu declamiren hätte, alles dieses besteht in der Empfindung, und kan nicht wohl explicirt werden, wie sie bässer wissen, als ich;—Ich Ermangle zwar nicht zu pflanzen, aber handeln habe ich bis dato noch nicht können, dan kaum war ich in Wien angekommen, so verreiste der Kaiser, und ist noch nicht zurücke gekommen, über dieses muss man annoch die gutte Virlstunde beobachten, umb Etwas effectuiren zu können, bey grosen Höffen findt man selten gelegenheit, Etwas guttes anzubringen, indessen höre ich dennoch, das man will Eine Academie der Schönen Wissenschaften allhier Errichten, und das der Eintrag Von den Zeitungen, und Calendern soll Eine portion des fondi aussmachen, umb die Kosten zu bestreiten; wan ich werde bässer Von der sache unterrichtet sein, werde nicht Ermangeln ihnen alles zu berichten. Indessen haben sie mich Ein wenig lieb, bis ich wiederumb so glücklich bin sie zu sehen. Mein Weib und Tochter machen ihnen Ihre Complimenten und freyen sich sehr Von ihnen Etwas zu hören, und ich Verbleibe dero,

“Ihnen Ergebenster,

“GLUCK.”*

* Marx, ii. pp. 144, 145.

Evidently the introductions to *Alceste* and *Paris and Helen* were not the work of the composer himself.

Meanwhile another opera was wanted for Paris, and Gluck gave them his *Cythère assiégée*, which he had written in 1759, and which was now somewhat altered for the French stage. Passages were inserted in it from *Paris and Helen* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and Berton himself composed some of the new music for it.* It was produced on the 11th August 1775, but was received with little else but laughter. Even Gluck's own adherents were forced to admit the failure, and to console themselves with the *mot* of Arnaud, that "Hercules was more at home with the club than the distaff."

He had received from the Directors of the Opera a commission for two new works, as well as for an adaptation of *Alceste*. The two works were Quinault's *Armida*, and an opera, *Roland*, based on a poem of Quinault, though not following it entirely. But in his absence from Paris the Italianist party had been steadily working to undermine his influence, which could best be done, they thought, by bringing another musician to write in opposition to him. Accordingly they brought to Paris the Neapolitan Piccinni (born 1728), at that time one of the most celebrated and most popular composers in Europe; a facile writer, whose operas, says his biographer Ginguené, had already mounted up to the respectable number of one hundred and thirty. One fine morning Gluck received the information that to Piccinni also had been entrusted the composition of a *Roland*. His

* See Marx, ii. pp. 148-155.

anger was great ; according to his own account, he immediately cast the score of his opera into the fire. His letter to Du Roulet will give an idea of his state of mind :

“I have just received your letter of the 15th January, in which, my dear friend, you exhort me to work diligently at the opera *Roland*. This is no longer possible, for as soon as I heard that the Directors, who were not ignorant that I was at work on this opera, had given the same text to Signor Piccinni, I cast into the flames all I had completed of it. Perhaps it was not worth much, and in that case the public will be greatly obliged to M. Marmontel, who in this way has spared them the misfortune of hearing bad music. Moreover, I do not feel fit to enter into a contest. Signor Piccinni would have too great an advantage over me ; since, besides his personal merit, which is undoubtedly great, he would have the advantage of novelty, for Paris has already had from me four operas—whether good or bad matters not ; in any case, they exhaust the imagination. Moreover, I have marked out the path for him, and he has only to follow it. I say nothing of his patrons ; I am sure that a certain politician of my acquaintance * will have three-fourths of Paris to dinner and supper, in order to make proselytes, and that Marmontel, who is so good at stories, will acquaint the whole kingdom with the exclusive merit of Signor Piccinni. I pity M. Hébert † sincerely for

* Marquis Caraccioli, the Neapolitan ambassador at Paris, a patron of Piccinni.

† A director of the Opéra.

having fallen into the clutches of such people, one of whom is a blind admirer of Italian music, and the other the author of so-called comic operas ; they will make him see the moon at midday.

“I am truly put out about it, for M. Hébert is a worthy man, and that is why I do not hesitate to give him my *Armida*, on the conditions, however, which I mentioned to you in my previous letter, and of which the essential points are, that when I come to Paris I must have at least two months in which to train my actors and actresses ; that I shall be at liberty to have as many rehearsals as I think necessary ; that no part shall be doubled ; and that another opera shall be in readiness, in case any actor or actress shall fall sick. These are my conditions, without which I will keep *Armida* for my own pleasure. I have written the music of it in such a way that it will not soon grow old.

“You say in your letter, my friend, that none of my works will ever compare with *Alceste*. This prophecy I cannot agree with. *Alceste* is a perfect tragedy, and I do not think it often fails of its full perfection. But you cannot imagine how many shades and manners music is capable of, and what varied paths it can follow. *Armida* is so different from *Alceste*, that one would hardly believe they were by the same composer ; and I have put into it what little power remained to me after *Alceste*. I have striven to be, in *Armida*, more painter and poet than musician ; of that, however, you will be able to judge yourself when you hear the opera. With it I think to close my career as an artist. The public, indeed, will take as long to understand *Armida* as they did to understand *Alceste*.

There is a kind of refinement in the former that is not in the latter ; for I have managed to make the different personages express themselves in such a way that you will be able to tell at once whether Armida or another is singing. I must end, or you might think me either a charlatan or a lunatic. Nothing sits so badly on a man as praise of himself ; it only suited the great Corneille. When I or Marmontel blow our own trumpets, people laugh in our faces. For the rest, you are right in saying that the French composers are too greatly neglected ; for I am very much in error if Gossec and Philidor, who understand the style of the French opera so well, could not serve the public better than the best of Italian composers, if people were not too enthusiastic over whatever is new. You say further, dear friend, that *Orfeo* loses in a comparison with *Alceste*. But, good heavens ! how is it possible to compare two works that have nothing in common ? The one can please as well as the other ; but put *Alceste* on the stage with your worst players and *Orfeo* with your best, and you will see that *Orfeo* will bear away the prize ; the best things become insupportable in a bad performance. Between two works of a different nature there can be no comparison. If, for example, Piccinni and I had both composed a *Roland*, then people would have been able to judge which was the better ; different libretti must necessarily produce different compositions, each of which might be the most beautiful of its kind ; in any other case—*omnis comparatio claudicat*. Indeed I must almost tremble at the idea of a comparison between *Armida* and *Alceste*—two poems so diverse, of which

one moves to tears and the other stimulates exquisite sensations. If such comparisons are made, I do not know what to do, except to pray God to give the worthy city of Paris its sound common sense again."*

This letter subsequently appeared in the *Année Littéraire* for 1776, "without the participation," it was said, "either of M. Gluck or of the person to whom it is addressed ;" but we may discount that statement considerably. Gluck evidently intended the letter for publication.

Now, however, he thought it time to do something himself, and accordingly he set out for Paris with the altered score of *Alceste*. This was produced on 23rd April 1776; † and though the first and second acts were applauded, the third fell flat. It is related that Gluck, who had been watching the house from the wings, rushed despairingly into the street, where he happened upon the Abbé Arnaud. "*Alceste* is fallen!" moaned the composer. "Fallen from heaven!" replied the consoling Abbé. Corancez wrote at a later date :

"*Alceste* was not successful at the first representation. I met Gluck in the corridor, and found him more occupied in seeking the cause of an event that seemed to him so extraordinary, than affected by the small success of the opera. 'It would be a joke,' he said to me, 'if it were to fail; it would be an epoch in the history of taste of your nation. I can conceive

* Marx, ii. pp. 156-159. Desnoiresterres, p. 124.

† The title runs—"Represented for the first time by the Académie Royale de Musique, 30th April 1776."

that a piece composed in a purely musical style should succeed or not succeed; I can conceive even that a piece of this kind should be passionately admired at first, and then die in the presence of, and, so to speak, with the consent of its first admirers; but that I should witness the failure of a piece modelled wholly on the truth of nature, and in which all the passions have their true accent—I admit that this amazes me. *Alceste*,’ he added proudly, ‘can only displease now when it is new; it has not yet had time; I say that it will please equally in two hundred years, if the French language does not change; and my reason for saying so is that I have built wholly on nature, which is never subject to changes of fashion.’”*

But Gluck might have remembered that *Alceste* had at first met with a similar reception at Vienna, and that the non-success of the opera at its first hearing there, as at Paris, was due to the unrelieved sombreness of its colouring, and the uniformity, amounting almost to monotony, of its subject. Rousseau, indeed, pointed this out in his “Fragments d’observations sur l’*Alceste* italien de M. le chevalier Gluck”:

“I know no opera in which the passions are less varied than in *Alceste*; almost everything turns on two sentiments, affliction and terror, and the prolonged employment of these two sentiments must have cost the composer incredible pains to avoid the most lamentable monotony. Generally speaking, the more warmth there is in the situations and expressions, the more prompt and rapid should be their passage;

* Desnoiresterres, p. 130.

otherwise the force of the emotion decreases in the hearers; and when the proper limit is passed, the actor strives in vain, for the spectator grows cold and finally impatient.

“It results from this fault that the interest, instead of being quickened by degrees in the course of the piece, dies away to the end, which, with all respect to Euripides himself, is cold, dull, and almost laughable in its simplicity.”

As Gluck had passed over Sophie Arnould on account of her inferior physique, and confided the part of Alcestis to Rosalie Levasseur, the cry was heard that a cabal had been raised against the work by the friends of the slighted singer. But there was little truth in the charge, the best refutation of it being the fact that the success of *Alceste* grew with each performance. Gluck's friends were not idle in proclaiming the merit of the work: the Abbé Arnaud in particular distinguished himself by his *Soirée perdue à l'Opéra*—a controversial piece in the form of a dialogue, in which the Gluckist had an easy triumph over his opponent. Once more it may be worth while to quote a passage, as showing what contemporary criticism of music was like:

“‘One moment, one moment, Sir Eternal-admirer,’ cried angrily a man who wept with rage when every sensible person was weeping with compassion; ‘now you will hear a piece I challenge you to undertake to praise . . . There it is: well, what say you, gentlemen? four entire verses on the one tone, on the same note! Could anything be more wretched? is it not the very negation of music?’ ‘It is true that the

function of music, and especially theatrical music, is to seize the accent of the passions, to embellish it, fortify it, and render it more palpable ; but these are *shades* on the stage, and there are no passions beyond this life ; these verses are not susceptible of any other declamation ; and it is in depriving them of even their natural and ordinary accents that the chevalier Gluck proves his fine sense of the congruous. However, as it is not simply a matter of imitation, and as imitation ought to have place in music, keep one ear open for the orchestra, and you will see that the composer supplements this monotonous declamation by a most varied, most expressive, and most picturesque harmony—a harmony that will affect all sensible persons, and at the same time move with terror and admiration those who have not only sensibility but a knowledge of art.’”*

This defence of the part of the music in question was undoubtedly suggested to Arnaud by Gluck himself, for we find it reappearing in Corancez :

“The chorus of the infernal deities struck me with terror, but I could not conceive what had led M. Gluck to make these four verses be sung to a single note.

“‘It is not possible,’ he said to me, ‘to imitate the language of fantastic beings, since we have never heard them ; but we have to try to approach the ideas inspired in us by the functions with which they are charged. Devils, for instance, have a conventional character that is well known and very pronounced ;

* “La Soirée perdue à l’Opéra,” pp. 53, 54, in “Mémoires pour servir,” etc.

they ought to be dominated by excess of rage and madness. But the infernal gods are not devils; we regard them as the ministers of destiny; they are not swayed by any peculiar passion; they are impassible. Alcestis and Admetus are indifferent to them; all they have to do with them is the accomplishing of destiny. In order to delineate this special impassibility of theirs, I thought I could not do better than deprive them of all accent, reserving for my orchestra the task of painting all that is terrible in their announcement.’”

And again Corancez writes :

“I was at the first rehearsal of *Alceste*; I thought myself alone in the amphitheatre, which was in darkness. The execution of the march of priestesses probably drew from me some external sign of approbation. M. Gluck was almost at my side without my seeing him. ‘So this march pleases you,’ he said, coming up to me. ‘It does indeed,’ I replied; ‘it has a religious character which at once pleases and surprises me.’ ‘I will explain it to you,’ he said. ‘I have observed that all the Greek poets who have composed hymns for the temples have made a certain metre predominate in their odes; I have thought that this metre had in it something sacred and religious; I have composed my march in conformity with the same succession of longs and shorts; and now I see that I was right.’ Then, striking me on the shoulder, ‘They were fine fellows, those Greeks!’”*

* *Journal de Paris*, No. 237, 24th Aug. 1788. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 134-137.

The opera, of course, as has been already stated, was altered from its first Italian form, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse. Marx discusses the question fully,* but his bias against French taste and French feeling makes him depreciate unnecessarily the later form of the opera; *Alceste* was certainly improved in some respects by the change, although it has to be as freely admitted that Du Roullet's version † weakened the poem in parts. The Hercules especially was a concession to French tastes, being a reminiscence of the *Alceste* of Quinault and Lully. Grimm points out the defects in the character of Admetus in the second act, and the faults of construction in the third: "What a difference between this poem and that of Quinault!"

Meanwhile a misfortune had befallen the composer; his niece Marianne had died on the 22nd April, the day before the production of *Alceste*. At Vienna, whither he now repaired, he had the satisfaction of hearing that *Alceste* had at last captured the French taste. Further honours crowded in on him. "Certain actors, musicians, men of letters and of society, at the head of whom we may name Berton, Legros, Gélín, Larrivée, Gossec, Leduc, Langlé and Rollan, agreed, by a private act before a notary of Paris, on the 17th July 1776, to bear the whole expense of a marble bust of the German composer, the execution of which was entrusted to Houdon. The author of

* Marx. ii. 160-170.

† It is certain, from the testimony of Grimm and Reichardt, that the French version is by Du Roullet, and not, as was formerly supposed, by Guillard.

Orphée was treated as the author of *Zaire* had been treated six years before; and it is this bust which, after having been exhibited at the Salon of 1777, was placed by the order of the king in the grand *foyer* of the Opéra, by the side of that of Rameau.*

After *Alceste*, *Iphigenia in Aulis* was again brought out, with Sophie Arnould in her original part. And now La Harpe, one of the enemies of Gluck, unburdened himself, in his *Journal de politique et de littérature*, in a passage that is worth quoting as another light on the manner of eighteenth-century criticism:

“Those who reproach M. Gluck with frequent lack of melody, remark, to the advantage of Italian composers, that their airs when separate from the accompaniment still have great beauty. But at least one cannot deny that M. Gluck repairs this lack of melody, as far as possible, by his profound knowledge of harmony and the effects of which it is capable.

“Another observation has been made *à propos* of the duet of Achilles and Agamemnon in the second act. It is, that it is in no way consistent with the dignity of two heroes to be speaking at the same time, as when two vulgar people are quarrelling; and indeed this conflict of menaces and clashing cries is absolutely lacking in the nobility that should characterise this scene, and does not inspire the terror one ought to feel when in the presence of two such men as Achilles and Agamemnon. One might go still further, and say that the music hardly lends itself thoroughly to the

* Desnoiresterres, pp. 147, 148.

main expression of this scene. The accent of pride is hard and anti-harmonic ; and this dialogue of Achilles and Agamemnon is of a kind of recitative at which the ear is at any rate astonished. It should not rise even into declamation, in which style, nevertheless, the attempt has been made to write it ; and perhaps Achilles and Agamemnon could not brave each other in music. What is certain is that the effect of this scene, when sung, is very inferior to the effect of the same scene when declaimed ; and although it may be true in general that music can render everything, perhaps it is as well not to employ it on objects to which it cannot be felicitously applied.”*

This brought upon La Harpe, who was undoubtedly the most stupid of all the stupid littérateurs who wrote about music in those days, an attack in the *Journal de Paris* by the celebrated “Anonyme de Vaugirard.” The contest went on for some time, arousing an extraordinary amount of interest in the musical world. La Harpe was no match for his antagonist, who easily convicted him of being as weak in his reasoning as he was superficial in his knowledge of the subject. But the war went raging on in other quarters. It was about this time that Marmontel’s “*Essai sur les révolutions de la musique en France*” appeared—a work not without merit, having for its object to demonstrate that while the French stage was incontestably superior to the Italian, its music was as incontestably inferior, and that a true opera would only be obtained by trans-

* *Journal de politique et de littérature*, 5th March 1777. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 149, 150.

planting Italian melody into the really dramatic poems that were in favour in Paris. Innumerable pamphlets sprang forth in reply to Marmontel and La Harpe, —“ Lettre d’un gentilhomme allemand à qui l’on avoit prêté l’Essai sur les révolutions de la musique : ” “ La Brochure et M. Jérôme, petit conte moral ; ” “ Lettre d’un hermite de la forêt de Sénart ; ” and so on.*

Piccinni, the intended rival of Gluck, had left Naples on 16th November 1776, arriving in Paris on the 31st December. At this time he was a man of about forty-eight years old ; pale, thin, weak, and impressionable ; evidently no fit antagonist for the vigorous Gluck. Piccinni had to set to work to learn the French language, and had little time for anything but continuous reading of Voltaire, Rousseau and Racine. Marmontel had adapted Quinault’s *Roland* for the Italian composer, and spent three or four hours a day with him, trying to endow him with a just appreciation of accent and quantity.

All this time Gluck was working at the fifth of the great works by which he was to be remembered. On this occasion he had gone straight back to Quinault, accepting the libretto of *Armida* as the poet had written it and as it had been set by Lully. In a notice of the opera in the *Journal de Paris* the following reasons were given for Gluck’s retention of the original poem : “ The plan of Quinault’s poems is not the most favourable for dramatic music ; M. Gluck might have been able to avoid some of the difficulties by suppressing in *Armida* several feeble or

* See Desnoireterres, p. 163.

incongruous details, as has been done in some late reproductions of Lully's opera. He has been desirous of preserving in its entirety this masterpiece of our lyric theatre, and has been convinced that in his art there are resources sufficient not only to make admirable the beauties of this poem, but further, to cover or even embellish its faults. Time will show how far he has succeeded in this attempt, which deserves at least the gratitude of admirers of Quinault." * Probably this laudable motive, however—to preserve in its entirety the masterpiece of the lyric theatre—was not the real one; it seems likely that Gluck had had a suspicion that some of the success of his former works was due to the libretti of his collaborateurs; and he may further have thought that by working upon the unaltered poem of Quinault he might propitiate beforehand many who were formerly against him. The work was given on the 23rd September 1777, to a crowded and not very appreciative house.

In *Armida* Gluck has left classical antiquity for a time; in choosing for his new opera a poem the central idea of which was drawn from Tasso and the East, he was making one more uncertain and unconscious movement towards the Romanticism that characterised the later epochs of music.

The overture is a modification of the one he had written to *Telemacco* and afterwards used for *Le feste d'Apollon*. This was not the only instance of the employment in *Armida* of themes from his earlier

* *Journal de Paris*, Sept. 1777. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 206, 207.

operas ; the air of Hate, *Plus on connaît l'amour*, is an adaptation of one of Jupiter's airs in *Bauci e Filemone* ; while other portions of the opera are taken from *Le nozze d'Ercole e d'Ebe*, from *Telemacco*, from *L'innocenza giustificata*, and from *Don Juan*. The overture begins with a pompous subject in C major, that leads after a few bars into a theme of a more agitated character, which may be taken to denote the mental anguish and irresolution of Armida ; when prefixed to *Telemacco* it had reference to Circe. The next theme is thoroughly dramatic and pointedly referable to the opera itself, and is handled with more skill and persistency than is generally the case in Gluck's music ; keeping the opening theme of this section running almost throughout, he cleverly interweaves others with it and draws new meanings from it ; then, with a repetition of the "Armida" theme of the first section in a modified form, the overture leads at once into the opening scene of the first act.

Armida is seen in the garden of her palace with her *confidantes*, Phénice and Sidonie, who are urging her to banish care and melancholy. No regular aria is assigned either to Phénice or to Sidonie ; they carry the flood of melody on by turns in a rather charming manner. The music is soft and gentle and languorous, one fine trait being noticeable—the disturbing element that is introduced into the harmony as soon as the war is mentioned ; we hear a reminiscence of the theme that is so well worked out in the second section of the overture. A different colour is diffused over the music when Armida speaks ; she complains that whatever may be her power over the other warriors it fails

to subdue Rinaldo, and this although he is in the maytime of youth, when he should be most susceptible to love. Phénice and Sidonie endeavour to console her with the philosophical reflection that one victory more or less can make very little difference to her, and that the proper way to make Rinaldo conscious of his shortcomings is to treat him with contemptuous disregard. Again the pictorial change comes over the music when Armida replies. In rapid and vigorous tones she reminds them of the prophecy that her power would be vain against this hero ; and the accents rise and quicken as she exclaims : “ How I hate him ! how his scorn wounds me ! in spite of myself, incessantly the thought of him disturbs my rest.” Then in a recitative she narrates her dream, in which Rinaldo had vanquished her, and Sidonie tries to console her in an aria that is an adaptation of one in *Paris and Helen*.

A few bars of music of a pompous character are now heard—the kind of pretentious nullity that was always employed to signify the arrival of some important personage—and Hidraot, the uncle of Armida, enters. He wants her to choose a husband, that when his own days end he may know that Armida will leave others to inherit the kingdom. She replies, in the language of the Court of Louis XIV., that she “dreads the alluring tie of Hymen :” “ Ah ! how unhappy does the heart become when liberty abandons it.” Hidraot admonishes her again, singing the praises of wedded life, and reminding her that she has only to look in order to conquer ; but she reiterates her resolve to live alone, adding that she admires before all things valour,

and that she would bestow her hand upon no one but the conqueror of Rinaldo. Then the chorus sing the praises of her power and beauty, their song being interspersed with stanzas for Phénice and Sidonie, and a very pretty ballet. It is noticeable how Gluck maintains the pictorial method he had spoken of in his letter to Du Rouillet, where he speaks of each character having a music of its own that at once distinguishes it from all the rest. Each time Phénice or Sidonie or Armida sings, the music undergoes a total change.

Just as all are celebrating the might of Armida, however, and her power to vanquish heroes and armies with a smile, Arontes enters, bleeding from his wounds, and bearing the news that as he was conducting his captives thither they were taken from him by the prowess of a single warrior. "A single warrior!" all exclaim; while Armida ejaculates, "O heaven! it is Rinaldo!" "It is he," replies Arontes; and in a fine chorus, full of movement and passion, all swear to pursue the victor and have vengeance.

The second act opens in a woody country, where Rinaldo is taking farewell of Artemidoro, who is returning to the Christian camp after having been rescued from his captors by the hero. Artemidoro wishes to accompany him in his adventures, but Rinaldo urges him to return to the camp; he, for his part, having incurred the wrath of Godfrey, must pursue his undertaking alone. Artemidoro warns him against the blandishments of Armida; Rinaldo replies that he is indifferent to her charms, his only passion being for liberty.

In the next scene, Armida and Hidraot, in a duet that sometimes rises into sublimity, call upon the spirits of hate and rage to deliver Rinaldo into their hands. Hidraot wishes to ensnare him by means of an ambuscade, but Armida claims the right to take him captive in her own way and to slay him herself.

Rinaldo now appears in the garden which Armida and Hidraot have just quitted. In the orchestra is heard a gliding, voluptuous strain, rising and falling, swelling and dying away ; gradually his voice blends with it, but the voice-part is a thing apart from and independent of the accompaniment, which flows on unceasingly in the orchestra, a perfect instrumental picture of languorous delight. Nothing that Gluck had written up to this time was so uninterruptedly perfect as this ; its voluptuous, cloying beauty is in marked contrast to much of his music, with its usual qualities of rigidity and reserve. The spell is maintained to the end, when Rinaldo, overcome by the magical enchantment of the place, lays down his arms one by one, and finally sinks into slumber. Naiads sing about him, and a ballet is danced ; especially noticeable is the tender final song of the naiad.

A spirited theme in the orchestra announces the presence of Armida ; she rushes forward, dagger in hand, contemplating the sleeping form of Rinaldo. But her exultation is marred by an undercurrent of weakness, cunningly denoted in the orchestra, before there is a suspicion of it in the words, by a hesitating phrase interpolated in her recitative ; time after time she approaches him to plunge the dagger in his breast, yet always finds herself overcome at the sight of him.

Finally, in an aria of magnificent expression, she yields herself regretfully to love, and invokes the powers of earth to transport her with Rinaldo to the bounds of the universe. It is strange what a passion of profound regret quivers through this music, which is ostensibly a confession of love ; Gluck was at the height of his psychological power in thus portraying the struggle of Armida against her sudden engulfing passion.

Equally fine is her aria at the beginning of the third act, where she again laments her weakness, and the contrast between the deep, moving passion of the music and the frigid formalism of the words is most noticeable. More than once Gluck has written some of his finest and most enduring music to words that, apart from the music, are intellectually almost ridiculous.

Close upon Armida's lament is heard the light-hearted frippery that serves to designate Phénice and Sidonie. They attempt to console her in the usual way, but she is inconsolable ; Rinaldo has rejected her love, and in a frenzy she calls upon the spirit of Hate to appear. Hate sings an aria descriptive of his power, and then, after a chorus and a strange ballet of Furies, conjures Love to yield to him his place in Armida's heart ; and there follows another ballet. Armida however finally lifts up her voice in protest, in a duet with Hate. While he sings "Love, break thy chain ; leave Armida's bosom," she cries, in the language of the time, "Cease, oh dreadful Hate ! leave me under the laws of so charming a conqueror ; leave me ! I renounce thy fearful aid ! No ! it is impossible to take Love from me without

tearing out my heart." Then Hate turns on her, telling her, seconded by the chorus, that since she has chosen Love, Love she shall have, but that in the end Love will prove her bane; and in a short monologue, Armida, left alone, abandons herself to the tender god as her only solace.

The fourth act is both ridiculous in itself and wholly undramatic and unnecessary as far as the opera is concerned. Ubaldo and the Danish knight are first beheld struggling among the horrors and pitfalls of the scene; but they disperse the demons and emerge into the open country by the charm of Ubaldo's magic wand. Joining in a duet, they warn each other against the seductive influences of the place. Ubaldo points out the palace of the enchantress, wherein lies captive the hero they have been deputed to rescue. An evil spirit however appears, under the form of Lucinda, the beloved of the Danish knight, and by the aid of song, a chorus of spirits like-minded with herself, and a ballet, works upon the susceptible warrior's feelings; and in spite of his companion's protestations, he is about to wander off with the fair one, when Ubaldo's magic staff breaks the spell, Lucinda disappears, and the scales fall from the eyes of the Danish knight. Congratulating each other and moralising profoundly over these things, they pass on, when, to complete the farce, a second spirit appears as Melissa, the beloved of Ubaldo, and the same performance is gone through again, the Danish knight this time brandishing the magic staff. Then they go on their way rejoicing, singing yet another duet to fortify each other's soul against the

seductions of the enchantress, the pauses in the duet being filled with a languorous phrase carrying the mind significantly back to the scene of their temptation.

The fifth act opens in a room in the palace, where Armida is taking leave of Rinaldo ; he clings to her, begging her not to quit him. This scene is the most voluptuously beautiful that ever came from Gluck's pen. Well might he say in after-years, according to Grétry, that if ever he was damned it would be for this scene. The enchantment of the garden is upon us, cloying our taste and sealing up our eyes ; the very air seems heavy-laden with subtle narcotic fragrance ; and for once we are out of the formal salons of the eighteenth century, in the wind-swept valleys of Romanticism. Here Gluck rises for once above the grinding commonplaces of his age ; here he has communion with more secret voices, hears more secret whispers of imaginative beauty, than were ever his before or after. One wonders what strange new stirring of unknown depths of soul was in this old man of sixty, when, in the midst of labour that so often required the merest mechanical unimaginativeness, there came over him this wondrous breath of emotions unknown to him before. In the garden scene, indeed, he had sunk his senses in voluptuous delight in romantic beauty, so that the music almost seems filled with the placid murmur of the waters and the odour of the falling rose-leaves ; but here the enchantment is even more subtle, more imaginative, more romantic. It is a foreshadowing of all that was most beautiful and most seductive in Romantic art.

Weighed down with presentiments of evil, Armida

wishes to leave Rinaldo to consult the powers, but he reproaches her with lack of love. The only fault in their beautiful duet is the long passage on the word *flamme*, towards the end, traversed by the voices in concert. Leaving him at last, she calls the spirits together to charm him with their play, which they do in the customary choruses and ballets—the choruses showing more grace and flexibility of imagination than is customary with Gluck on these occasions. Rinaldo, weary of everything if Armida is not there, finally drives the spirits away; and the next scene shows him with Ubaldo and the Danish knight, who rouse him to his better senses and persuade him to accompany them. Just as they are leaving, however, Armida returns. All her protestations of love are vain; and Rinaldo takes leave of her in the courtliest language of the time: “Armida, it is true I flee from the too charming peril I find in seeing you; glory demands that I leave you, and orders love to yield to duty. If you suffer, rest assured that it is with regret I disappear from your sight; you will always reign in my memory, and, after glory, it will be you I shall love most.” Her reply is less elegant and more impetuous, striking chords of genuine passion. Sincerity of feeling, again, breathes through the regret of Rinaldo as he sees her fall at his feet; but beholding this last sign of weakness in him, Ubaldo and the Danish knight promptly rush in, and, exhorting him to be steadfast, lead him off. In the final scene, where Armida, left alone, calls upon the demons to destroy her palace about her, Gluck is once more almost at his best and highest.

As was said above, *Armida* was not altogether successful at the first performance, while the customary *sottises* were perpetrated in the journals at the first opportunity. La Harpe especially had scarcely a good word for the opera. "There was no melody in the new work ; everything was carried on in recitative. The part of *Armida*, almost from one end to the other, was a monotonous and fatiguing shriek ; the musician had made his heroine a *Medea* ; he had forgotten that she was an enchantress, not a sorceress. In *Orphée* the melody was perceptible ; there it was treated with a superiority which it would be bad grace to deny ; but that was an exception ; M. Gluck appeared to have made it his purpose to banish song from the lyrical drama, and seemed to be persuaded, as his partisans said, that song is contrary to the nature of the dialogue, to the progress of the scenes, and to the *ensemble* of the action."*

"I will say then to M. Gluck, in conclusion, 'I prefer your *Orphée*. It has pleased you, since that time, to write as little melody as possible. You have given up that truly lyrical plan of a drama interspersed with airs, which you yourself have expounded to us. You have come back to *Armida*, which is a very fine poem and a bad opera, to establish the reign of your melopœia, sustained by your choruses and your orchestra. I admire your choruses and the resources of your harmony. I could wish you to be more prodigal in your melopœia, and that it were more adapted to the French phrase ; that it were less broken and

* Desnoiresterres, p. 209.

less noisy ; and above all, I could wish for some arias. For I like the music one sings and the verses one carries away.

“ I am not unaware that this opinion is strongly opposed to that of several of your friends, whom I like and esteem infinitely. But as, in order to like and esteem each other, it is not necessary to hold the same opinions on music, I hope they will pardon my ignorance, and that they will be content to regard me as a free lance, who, being of good faith, can never be sectarian, and whose heresy is not dangerous.’ ”*

This criticism roused the ire of Gluck, who replied with extraordinary bitterness in a letter to the *Journal de Paris* of 12th October :

“ It is impossible, sir, for me to do anything but agree with the intelligent observations on my opera that appear in the number of your journal for the fifth of this month ; I find in it nothing, absolutely nothing, to contravene.

“ I have been simple enough to believe, till now, that music, like the other arts, embraces the whole sphere of the passions, and that it cannot please less when it expresses the troubles of a madman and the cry of grief, than when it paints the sighs of love.

“ Il n'est point de serpent ni de monstre odieux,
Qui, par l'art imité, ne puisse plaire aux yeux.

“ I have thought that this rule should hold in music equally as in poetry. I have persuaded myself that

* *Journal de politique et de littérature*, Oct. 1777. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 209, 210.

song, when it thoroughly takes the colour of the feeling it is to express, should be as various and as many-sided as feeling itself; in fine, that the voices, the instruments, the tones, even the pauses, should strive after one end—expression—and the agreement between the words and the song should be such that neither the poem should seem to be made for the music nor the music for the poem.

“However, this was not my only error; I thought I had noticed that the French language was less rhythmical than the Italian, and that it had not the same definiteness in the syllables; I was astonished at the difference between the singers of the two nations, as I found the voices of the one soft and pliable, those of the other stronger and more suited for the drama; and so I had decided that Italian melody could not link itself with French words. Then, when I came to examine the scores of their old operas, I found that in spite of the trills, runs, and other inappropriate devices with which they were overladen, there were yet so many genuine beauties in them that I was prompted to believe that the French had within themselves all that was required to do good work.

“These were my ideas before I had read your observations. Now, however, you have lightened my darkness; I am wholly astonished that in a few hours you have made more observations on my art than I myself in a practical experience of forty years. You prove to me that it is sufficient to be a well-read man, in order to speak on everything. Now am I convinced that the Italian is the most excellent, the *true* music; that the melody, if it is to please, must be

regular and periodic, and that even in a moment of confusion, where we have to do with the vocal utterances of several persons swayed by varying passions, the composer must still maintain this regularity of melody.

“I agree with you that of all my compositions *Orfeo* alone is supportable; and I sincerely beg the forgiveness of the gods of taste for having deafened the hearers of my other operas; the number of their representations and the applause the public has been good enough to bestow on them do not prevent my seeing how pitiable they are. I am so convinced of it that I wish to re-write them; and as I see that you are passionate for tender music, I will put in the mouth of the furious Achilles a song so tender and so sweet, that all the spectators will be moved to tears.

“As for *Armida*, I will be very careful to leave the poem as it is; for, as you very perspicaciously observe, ‘the operas of Quinault, although full of beauties, are yet not well adapted for music; they are fine poems but bad operas.’ So that if they are written to bad poems, which, according to your view, will make fine operas, I beg you to introduce me to a poet who will put *Armida* in order, and give two airs to each scene. We will between us settle the quantity and measure of the verse, and when the syllables are complete I will take the rest on my own shoulders. I, for my part, will go over the music again, and conscientiously strike out, according to reason, all the loud instruments, especially the kettle-drums and trumpets; I will take care that nothing shall be heard

in my orchestra but oboes, flutes, French horns, and muted violins. And there will be no more question whence the text of the airs was taken ; this can no longer matter, since we have already taken up our position.

“Then will the part of Armida no longer be a monotonous and fatiguing shriek ; she will no longer be a Medea, a sorceress, but an enchantress ; I will make her, when in despair, sing an aria so regular, so periodic, and at the same time so tender, that the *petite maîtresse* most afflicted with the vapours will be able to listen to it without the least damage to her nerves.

“If some wicked person should say to me, ‘Sir, be careful that Armida mad does not express herself like Armida amorous,’ I will reply : ‘Sir, I do not wish to frighten the ear of M. de La Harpe ; I do not wish to contravene nature ; I wish to embellish it ; instead of making Armida cry out, I want her to enchant you.’ If he insists, and shows me that Sophocles, in the finest of his tragedies, dared to show to the Athenians *Œdipus* with his bloody eyes, and that the recitative or noted declamation by which the eloquent plaints of the unfortunate king were rendered must have expressed the deepest sorrow, I will retort that M. de La Harpe does not wish to hear the cry of a man in suffering. Have I not well grasped, sir, the meaning of the doctrine laid down in your observations ? I have done some of my friends the pleasure to let them read your remarks.

“‘We must be grateful,’ said one of them as he handed them back to me ; ‘M. de La Harpe has given

you excellent advice ; it is his confession of faith in music ; do thou likewise. Get all his works in poetry and literature, and search out in them everything that pleases you through your friendship for him. Many people maintain that criticism does nothing more than upset the artist ; and to prove it, they say, the poets have at no time had more judges than now, and yet were never more mediocre than at present. But get the journalists here together in council, and if you ask them, they will tell you that nothing is so useful to the State as a journal. One might object to you, that, as a musician, you had no right to speak about poetry ; but is it not equally astounding to see a poet, a man of letters, who wants to have despotic opinions on music ? ’ ’ *

And not content with this, he published soon after, in the same journal, an entreaty to the “Anonyme de Vaugirard” (Suard) to take up the cudgels on his behalf against La Harpe.

“It seems that these gentlemen (the journalists) are happier when they write on other matters ; for if I may judge by the welcome the public has given to my works, the said public does not lay much store by their phrases and their opinions. But what think you of the new attack which one of them, M. de La Harpe has made on me ? He is a humorous doctor, this M. de La Harpe ; he speaks about music in a way that would make all the choir-boys in Europe shrug their shoulders ; he says, ‘I wish,’ and he says, ‘my doctrine.’

Et pueri nasum rhinocerotis habent.

* Marx, ii. pp. 236-239 ; Desnoiresterres, pp. 210, 211.

“Will you not say a few words to him, sir, you who have already defended me so well against him? Ah! I beg you, if my music has given you any pleasure, give me the opportunity of proving to my friends in Germany and Italy that, among the men of letters in France, there are some who, in speaking of the arts, at least know what they are talking about.”*

Suard was not long in publishing a reply to La Harpe, in which he had no difficulty in demonstrating that writer's entire lack of qualifications for the criticism of music. This brought out another letter from La Harpe, and this another from the Anonyme; and the contest becoming general—a kind of musical Donnybrook—any one who had a little wit to spare employed it in writing comic and serio-comic letters and treatises to M. de La Harpe. There were the “Letter of one ignorant of music to M. de La Harpe;” “Letters to M. de La Harpe from the Sieur Thibaudois de Gobemouche;” “Letters from a Serpent de paroisse to M. de La Harpe;” “Letters from a lady to M. de La Harpe;” “Verses by a man who loves music and every instrument except la harpe;” and so on.† The “Serpent de paroisse” letter is especially amusing.‡

Nevertheless, *Armida* grew in favour as time went on: It was about this time that Berton, the director of the opera, managed to get Gluck and Piccinni to dine together, and a curious anecdote is told

* *Journal de Paris*, Oct. 1777. In Desnoiresterres, pp. 211, 212.

† Desnoiresterres, pp. 213, 214.

‡ It is given in Barbedette, pp. 40-42.

respecting them. Gluck, so the story goes, had imbibed rather freely, and in the end leaned over to his rival in vinous generosity of confidence, and favoured him with his private opinion of the French. "The French," he said, "are worthy people, but they make me laugh; they want song, and they don't know how to sing. My dear friend, you are a man celebrated through all Europe. You think only of sustaining your glory; you give them fine music; are you any better for it? Believe me, here you must think of making money, and of nothing else."* Such is the profundity of after-dinner philosophy. The story is narrated by Ginguené, the biographer of Piccinni, his authority being the musician himself; and there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of it.

After a sojourn in Vienna, whither he had retired to write his next opera, Gluck made his preparations for another descent on Paris, sending word to Arnaud to make everything ready for him. An interesting letter is that to Guillard, the author of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in which the composer discusses the construction of the opera:

". . . . Do you wish me to reply as to the essential points? Gladly. In the first place, I will say that the changes you have made in your fourth act are to no purpose, because I have already finished the duet between Orestes and Pylades, and the final air of the act—*Divinité des grandes âmes!*—and I do not wish to alter anything in them. In what you call the fifth act, you must cut down the third strophe of

* Ginguené, "Vie de Piccinni," pp. 45-46.

the hymn, or else write a more interesting one; people would not understand the words, *le spectre fier et sauvage*, which, besides, scarcely make the situation any more pathetic. Your verses also must be of the same style, *quatre à quatre*; I myself have arranged the second strophe thus :

Dans les cieux et sur la terre
 Tout est soumis à ta loi ;
 Tout ce que l'Érèbe enserre
 A ton nom pâlit d'effroi !

“ If then you wish to write a third strophe, it must go like the second; and an important thing that must not be forgotten, is, that the ceremony takes place while they are singing, and that the same air must suit the ceremony. I also want Thoas, the high priest, to enter in a fury, in the fourth scene, singing an air of invective; and every verse must be written without recitative, so as to be sung right up to the catastrophe. By this means the dénouement would be richer by a decisive emotion and warmth, which would penetrate the actors and chorus with an irresistible effect. So, as far as you approve my idea, hasten to send me your words; if not, I will keep to the words already written.

“ Now we come to the great air that ends the act during the sacrifices. Here I want an air in which the words explain the music at the same time as the situation. The sense must terminate at the end of each verse, and not be repeated either at the beginning or end of the following verses. This is an essential condition for the verses; though it may be disre-

garded in the recitative, and so much the more happily as this mode of division is a certain means for distinguishing the lyric portion from the recitative, and for relieving the melody.

“ At the same time, for the words I ask of you, I want a verse of ten syllables, taking care to put a long and sonorous syllable wherever I indicate it ; your last verse must be sombre and solemn, if you wish it to be congruous with my music.

“ After these four verses—or eight, if you wish, provided they are all in the same metre—will come the chorus, *Contemplez ces tristes apprêts!* and this appears to me to suit the situation very well. I want the air here to have pretty nearly the same sense. After the chorus, the air will be resumed *da capo*, or else there will simply be the four verses you have written. I explain myself rather confusedly, for my head is excited with music ; if you do not understand me, we will leave the thing till my arrival, and then it will be soon done ; the rest, I think, we will leave as it is, cutting down the recitatives here and there, wherever they seem to be too long and mere repetitions. This will not damage the work, which ought I think, to have an astonishing effect.”*

About the end of November he returned to Paris with the score of *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Piccinni, meanwhile, had received rather questionable treatment. According to his own account, the poor Italian had been called in to Devismes, who asked him to set *Iphigenia in Tauris* to music, mentioning

* Desnoiresterres, pp. 250—252.

at the same time that Gluck was writing an opera upon what was practically the same poem, and giving him the assurance that his work would be produced before that of Gluck. Relying on this assurance, Piccinni had actually written two acts of the work, when he heard of the return of Gluck and the preparations for the production of the German master's *Iphigenia*. The Italian hastened to Devismes and reminded him of his promise, but in vain ; and when, thinking himself now at all events released from his promise of secrecy, he told Ginguené and Marmontel of the circumstances, and showed them the poem upon which he had been working, they saw that it was utterly foolish and worthless.

Gluck's *Iphigenia in Tauris* was produced on the 18th May 1778.

The mature hand of the master is seen at once in the beginning of the overture, so broad, so free, so firm is the handling. The first theme is peaceful and flowing, representing, as the score itself says, the calm of the elements ; after a few bars it breaks into the storm-music ; this increases in intensity until it culminates in some piercingly high tones, and with a descent from these the voice of Iphigenia at once strikes in, without the slightest break of the stream of music in the orchestra. She implores the gods to cease their thunders and be merciful to them ; the chorus of priestesses takes up the prayer, while all the time the storm goes rushing on in the orchestra, swelling to fiercer intensity ; then, when Iphigenia and the priestesses have again besought the gods to be propitious, the storm dies gradually down to an

exhaustion that in itself is subtly dramatic. In a magnificent recitative, filled with every variety of expression, Iphigenia relates her dream of the burning palace and the death of Agamemnon, the vision of her mother, and [the turning of her own knife against the breast of Orestes. The chorus again implore the mercy of the gods, and Iphigenia resumes her lament over the woes of her house in another fine recitative, that rises into quivering passion as she cries, "O dear Orestes! O my brother!" She sees no hope of escape from the Nemesis that is pursuing the house of Agamemnon, and in an aria of the finest expression she calls upon Diana to take away her life, that has already been too long; and the chorus add yet another shade of colour to the sombre scene—"Is there no end to our tears? Are they then unquenchable? In what a circle of sorrow have the gods set our life!" No words can do justice to the superb power of the whole of this scene, through which one dramatic spirit runs from the commencement to the end. Here was that unification of parts, for which Gluck so strenuously contended, at its finest and fullest; the recitative is at times a marvel of expression, and the orchestra plays a part in it the importance of which can only be realised by a comparison of it with even Gluck's best recitative up to this time; while the chorus works into the picture so appropriately and so dramatically, with such reticence of colour and such simple directness of feeling, that it forms a perfect background to the master-passion that flashes and quivers in the central figure of Iphigenia. And equally remarkable with the technical perfection of the scene is the firm hold Gluck

has upon the dramatic passion of it. At once, when the curtain rises, showing the storm-swept coast and the terror-stricken priestesses, Iphigenia becomes as tragically statuesque as in the Greek drama; she is one with the wind and the lightning; the storm of nature seems to burst again in dolorous passion from her own breast. From beginning to end, the characters stand in perfect setting, perfect harmony, with the scene around them.

The terror and outcry of the priestesses have brought Thoas to the spot, asking in superstitious fear what answer the gods have given. "Alas, they have been silent to our prayers!" replies Iphigenia, and Thoas rejoins, "It is not tears they wish, but blood!" and he tells of his haunting dread that the gods are angry with him, and how he must appease them; the earth seems to open to engulf him; in the night the thunderbolts of the gods play about his head. His aria is a finely psychological expression; Gluck, who excelled in these representations of superstitious terror, never fails to rouse fear and horror with his priests and oracles.

The Scythian followers of Thoas call in frenzied tones for a victim; and they burst out again when a Scythian enters and tells that two young strangers have been captured, one of them with despair graven on his countenance, and calling pitifully for death. Thoas bids Iphigenia prepare for the sacrifice, and commands his people to thank the gods; they break out into another savage chorus, followed by some strangely expressive ballets. Thoas demands of the captives who they are and what their mission;

Pylades answers that they cannot make themselves known. Thoas orders them to the altar, and with a cry of wild regret from Orestes, "O my friend, it is I who bring thee to death!" and with the fierce shouts of the Scythians, the first act comes to an end.

The second act opens with a scene between the two young Greeks. Orestes is refusing the consolations of Pylades, bemoaning his evil fate and the maleficence of the gods. In a fine aria he abandons himself to grief and despair; most remarkable is the independence of the part allotted to the orchestra. The following aria of Pylades, in which he exhorts his friend to patience, and glories in their common suffering, is one of the broadest and most uplifted melodies that ever came from Gluck's pen; high-mindedness and simple dignity breathe through every bar of it. An attendant of the temple now enters, bidding Pylades alone follow him; and the two friends burst into a duet of passionate declamation, that is really recitative applied to two voices instead of to one. In spite of their protests Pylades is taken away, and Orestes, left alone, calls in frenzied tones upon the gods to slay him; then an appalling silence spreads over everything, and in deep, pathetic accents he moans "Where am I? What calm is this succeeding the horror that held me?" and breaks into that masterpiece of dramatic expression, that alone would be enough to hand down the name of Gluck with honour to all time; "Now is my heart at peace again!" Every one knows the story of Gluck's passionate answer to the critic who objected to the tumult in the orchestra as being contradictory of the

words of Orestes—"He lies! He lies! He has been the murderer of his mother!" Pity-moving indeed is this great aria, where the voice of the tortured man hangs painfully and with weary complaint upon the long-drawn notes, while the orchestra surges and pulses beneath like an angry sea. "My heart grows calm again!" moans Orestes; "have my pains at last outwearied the anger of the gods? Is the end of my suffering at hand? Shall the parricide Orestes breathe again? O just gods! Avenging heaven! Yes! my heart grows calm again!" and all the while, underneath the accents of the singer—in themselves so weary and so pitiful—the orchestra presses forward in a slow, inexorable march, seeming to hold the voice in a grip of iron.

After a terrible ballet, the Furies break into a surging and regurgitating chorus—the finest Gluck ever wrote—"Let us avenge nature and the gods; let us invent torments for him; he has slain his mother!" On these last words the chorus pauses each time in its rapid movement, and draws the words out in hushed horror; then, on the word "mother," it swells out again with startling emphasis. And in the pauses of their hellish song is heard the pitiable moan of Orestes, driven to madness by their hideous speech and gestures.

While the torture is at its height Iphigenia enters; both she and Orestes start at the sight of each other. Iphigenia questions him as to whence he comes, and what purpose had brought him to those inhospitable shores. He replies, "I come from Mycænæ;" whereupon she demands of him news of Agamemnon. In a recitative that is constantly heightening in passion, he

replies that Agamemnon has been murdered. In hasty tones Iphigenia asks who has slain him. "In the name of the gods, ask me not!" replies Orestes; but she presses the question home upon him, till she falls back in horror as she hears from his lips of the treachery of Clytemnestra; and when he further tells her that Clytemnestra has been slain by Orestes, and that Orestes himself is now dead, she is crushed beneath the misfortunes of her ill-fated house. The chorus break into a song of mourning of exquisite and noble simplicity, and Iphigenia herself pours out her grief in the well-known aria, "O unhappy Iphigenia;" then she sings with the priestesses a lament for her brother.

In the third act, Iphigenia resolves to free one of the victims, sending him with a message to Electra. She has been seized with pity, more especially for Orestes, feeling drawn towards him by hidden movements of sympathy. In dolorous tones she reminds herself that all regrets for her brother are useless; only in the land of night can they meet again. Orestes and Pylades are brought to her, and after disclosing to them that she also is a Greek, she announces her intention of saving one of them, for the purpose of taking her letter to Argos; each eagerly craves the boon of life for the other. Her speech becomes grave and sad as she laments her impotence to save them both; finally she fixes upon Orestes as the one to bear her message. When she has departed, the friends contend with each other, Pylades rejoicing in the choice of the priestess, and Orestes refusing to accept life on such conditions. In a noble aria, Pylades pleads his love for his friend, but

all is vain ; and on the re-entry of Iphigenia, Orestes, swearing to immolate himself if Pylades be slain, is accepted for the sacrifice, and Pylades entrusted with the letter to Electra. He departs, vowing to return and rescue his friend.

In the fourth act, Iphigenia is on the rack of irresolution ; something within her forbids her to slay this prisoner. In an aria of magnificent passion of abandonment she calls upon Diana to steel her heart at the moment of sacrifice, that she may fulfil her duty as her priestess ; and the chorus offer up a prayer that this victim may appease the anger of the goddess. Orestes urges her to deal the fatal stroke, and in some of the most touching and pathetic music in the whole opera thanks her for her pity of him—pity he had received from no one else. The priestesses raise their voices in a solemn hymn to Diana, and Iphigenia, taking the sacrificial knife in her hand, is about to plunge it into Orestes' heart, when he cries out, at the last moment, "So didst thou die in Aulis, oh Iphigenia, my sister !" Then Iphigenia recognises him ; but in the midst of their transports a Greek woman enters with the news that Thoas is approaching to urge on the sacrifice of Orestes ; the orchestral accompaniment here rises to an unusual height of significance. Thoas appears, reproaches Iphigenia for allowing Pylades to escape, and commands the guards to seize Orestes and re-conduct him to the altar. In vain Iphigenia pleads that the victim is her brother ; roused to frenzy, Thoas is about to slay both Orestes and Iphigenia, when he is struck down by Pylades, who has returned with a

company of Greeks. After a short scene of terror on the part of the priestesses and the flight of the guards of Thoas, Diana appears and orders the Scythians to restore her image to the Greeks; and Iphigenia and Orestes return to their native land. The opera ends with a chorus, the theme of which is based on the final chorus of *Paris and Helen*; but in its employment here all the tender poetry and fragrance have fled from it.

Such was *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the last of Gluck's great operas and the finest. Here his imagination and his technical craft are at their highest maturity; he seems to have struck a balance between the two moods that were always in him, and that found expression on the one side in *Orfeo*, *Paris and Helen* and *Armida*, on the other in *Alceste* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. There were always two separate tendencies in Gluck—one to neglect all sensuous æsthetic pleasure for the attainment of dramatic intensity through declamation, the other to attempt to realise his purpose through emotional pleasure, to which dramatic meaning should be subsidiary, though not entirely alien. In *Iphigenia in Tauris* he combined these two tendencies and made them one. It is true that nothing need be looked for here that shall be like the charm of *Paris and Helen*, while there is much that bears the seal of the mood that incarnated itself in *Alceste* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*; but that is because of the nature of the subject. Its tragic tone lends itself at once to that strenuous dramatic treatment that characterises the two latter works, while at the same

time it makes a complete return to the aromatic style of *Paris* and *Armida* out of the question. But this style is still seen, though less distinctively, in union with the other ; and in the greater harmony of colour that is here spread over Gluck's earlier dramatic manner, and in a certain ease and grace and sure-footedness that make his style more telling and more artistic than it had been in the early days when he first set himself to reform the opera, *Iphigenia in Tauris* is unique among Gluck's works. It has in the highest degree the combination of high dramatic power with genuine musical sufficiency. And his thought had become by this time both more concentrated and more continuous. He gives greater unity to his scenes, carrying out one dramatic idea in them from beginning to end ; while at the same time each individual part of the music—recitative, air, chorus, accompaniment, ballet—is finer and stronger. How completely at his ease Gluck had now become in music is most clearly evident in his orchestral accompaniments, which here attain greater independence and more ample meaning than in any previous opera. What strikes us in much of his earlier work is that his mind was in some respects non-musical—that it worked on other lines, rather poetical than musical, trying to infuse into music a life that was partly alien to it. This it was, indeed, that prompted his utterance about forgetting that he was a musician ; for Gluck was at times undoubtedly non-musical in his imagination, and shared the fallacy of his century that the spheres of the arts were interchangeable. This tendency in him, however, was corrected by that more

purely lyrical tendency that found its outlet in *Armida* and in *Paris*, and in *Iphigenia in Tauris* he has amalgamated these two, has taken so much of the one as was necessary to give form and colour to the other, and produced a result that is at once vigorously dramatic and enjoyably musical. And here the final victory over the Italian school was achieved. Grimm was right when he said, "I don't know whether that is melody, but perhaps it is something better. When I hear *Iphigénie* I forget I am at the opera ; I seem to be listening to a Greek tragedy, with music by Lekain and Mdlle. Clairon."

The first performance was a fine one and thoroughly successful, the parts being taken by singers accustomed to Gluck's music. Mdlle. Levasseur was the Iphigenia, Larrivée the Orestes, Legros the Pylades, and Moreau the Thoas.

Gluck was of course in greater favour than ever with the Court by this time, and within a few months of the production of *Iphigenia* a new opera was demanded of him. He set to music *Echo et Narcisse*, the words of which were by the Baron Tschudi. It was produced on the 21st September 1779, but with only a moderate success ; it even failed to please the following year, when it was brought out in a shorter form. According to Noverre, however it was not without merit ; "the music," he says "was fresh, able, and agreeable ; gorgeous scenery, charming ballets, and dresses as pleasing as they were happily contrasted, helped the opera."*

* Marx, ii. 287.

According to his custom, Gluck travelled back to Vienna again. Age now began to tell upon him, and a fit of apoplexy was a warning that the end was near. He was still willing to write, however, and arrangements were actually concluded between him and the Paris Opéra for a new work, *Hypermnæstra*, which was to be ready by October 1782. Then came the rather disreputable incident of *Les Danaïdes*, which Gluck tried to sell to the Opéra for 20,000 livres, declaring that he himself had composed the two first acts, the remainder being by Salieri. After much negotiation and haggling about the price, the opera was really produced on the 26th April 1784. After it had become a success, Gluck confessed that the whole of the opera had been written by Salieri, he having taken no further part in it than advising his pupil; this was confirmed by Salieri in a letter to the *Journal de Paris*.*

The circumstances, however, were made interesting by a letter to the *Mercure de France* from Calzabigi; who complained of having been pillaged in the construction of the opera, and who, after making good his claim with some asperity, went on to say:

“I should have ended here, but I have yet more to be unburdened of. In speaking of the music of *Les Danaïdes* you say that ‘it is easy to recognise in the general spirit of the composition the great, firm, rapid, and sincere manner that characterises the system of the creator of dramatic music.’

“Here is what I have to say on the subject.

* 18th May, 1784.

“I am not a musician, but I have given great study to declamation. I am credited with a talent for reciting verses, particularly tragic verses, and more especially my own.

“Twenty-five years ago, I thought that the only music suitable for dramatic poetry, especially for the dialogue and for the airs we call *d'azione*, was that which would most nearly approach natural, animated, energetic declamation; that declamation itself is really only an imperfect kind of music; that it could be noted, if we could find sufficient signs to mark so many tones, so many inflexions, so many outbursts, so many softenings, and the infinitely varied shades given to the voice in declaiming. Music, then, to any verses, being in my opinion only a cleverer kind of declamation, more studied, and more enriched by the harmony of the accompaniment, I thought that here was the whole secret of writing excellent music to a drama; that the more compact, energetic, passionate, touching, harmonious, the poetry was, the more would the music that should express it thoroughly, in accordance with its true declamation, be the genuine music of that poetry, music *par excellence*.

“It was in meditating on these principles that I believed I had found the solution of this problem. Why are there airs like *Se cerca, se dice* of Pergolesi's *Olympiade*, *Misero pargoletto* of Leo's *Demofonte*, and many others, of which you cannot change the musical expression without becoming ridiculous; without, in fact, being driven back to the expression these great masters have given them? And why also is there an infinite number of other airs that do admit of

variations, although already noted by several composers ?

“I think the reason is that Pergolesi, Leo, and others have achieved the true poetical expression, the natural declamation of these arias, so that they are spoiled by being changed ; and if there are others susceptible of alteration, it is because no one has hit upon their true declamatory music.

“I arrived at Vienna in 1761, filled with these ideas. A year after, Count Durazzo—at that time Director of the theatre of the Imperial Court, and now ambassador at Venice—to whom I had recited my *Orfeo*, invited me to give it at the theatre. I consented, on the condition that the music should be written to please me. He sent me to M. Gluck, who, he said, would lend himself to my ideas.

“M. Gluck was not at that time considered—wrongly no doubt—among our greatest masters. Hasse, Buranello, Jomelli, Pérès and others occupied the first rank. No one understood the music of declamation, as I call it, and it would have been impossible for M. Gluck, not pronouncing our language well, to declaim many verses in succession.

“I read my *Orfeo* to him, and declaimed several parts of it to him, indicating the shades I put in my declamation, the suspension, the slackening of the time, the rapidity, the sounds of the voice—now forcible, now feeble and unstressed—that I desired him to employ in his composition. At the same time I begged him to banish the passages, cadenze and ritornelli, and everything that was Gothic, barbarous,

and extravagant in our music. M. Gluck shared my views.

“But declamation is lost in the aria, and frequently not found again: it would be necessary to preserve an equal animation throughout, and this constant and uniform sensibility does not exist. The most striking features are lost when the fire and the enthusiasm grow feeble. That is why there is so much diversity in the declamation of different actors of the same tragic piece; or in the same actor from day to day, and from one scene to another. The poet himself sometimes recites his verses well, sometimes badly.

“I sought for signs with which at least to mark the most striking features. I invented some of these, and placed them under the words throughout *Orfeo*. It was on such a manuscript, accompanied by notes in those passages where the signs did not make themselves completely intelligible, that M. Gluck composed his music. I did the same with *Alceste*. So true is this, that, the success of *Orfeo* having been undecided at the first few performances, M. Gluck threw the blame on me.

“As regards *Semiramide* and *Les Danaïdes*, not being able to declaim these tragedies to M. Gluck, nor to make use of my signs, which I have forgotten, and which he kept along with my original papers, I contented myself with sending him ample instructions in writing. Those for *Semiramide* alone filled three entire sheets. I have kept a copy, as well as a copy of those relating to *Les Danaïdes*. I may some day publish them.

“I hope you will agree, sir, after this statement,

that if M. Gluck has been the creator of dramatic music, he has not created it out of nothing. I furnished him with the matter—the chaos, if you will; so the honour of this creation must be shared by us.

“Connoisseurs have been delighted with this new style. From this general approbation I draw a conclusion that seems to me just, that the music written by M. Millico to my *Danaïdes* should be infinitely superior to that given at Paris with my drama.

“The author of this music (whoever he may be, for I hear M. Gluck disavows it) has not followed the declamation I wrote at Vienna, while M. Millico, when composing his music, saw me every day, and even declaimed with me the pieces he had in hand. If I did not fear to occupy your precious time to no purpose, I would send you my instructions, my notes on the only monologue of *Hypermnestra* (act iv. scene ii.) If you should desire it, I will send them to you.

“There is only one opinion as to the excellence of the music of M. Millico; I hope that it will appear some day. I dare flatter myself that the public will think of it as the *élite* of the Neapolitan and foreign nobility has done, who heard it at the house of Count Rasoumowsky.”*

Evidently Calzabigi represented the most extreme section of eighteenth-century amateurs, who wished to wed poetry to declamation instead of to music, and to imitate antiquity in all things. He certainly exaggerates his influence on Gluck, his share in *Orfeo*,

* Desnoiresterres, pp. 353–355.

and his pretensions to equal rank with Gluck as the creator of the musical drama. Gluck did much more in *Orfeo* than follow Calzabigi's notes indicating the declamation ; if he had not, his music would have already gone the way of Millico's.

Gluck's career as an artist had already closed, and all that was left was for the magnificent physical strength of the man to die slowly out. Since October, 1779, when he left Paris for the last time, he had taken up his residence at Vienna, in the Alte Wieden, opposite the Paulaner-kirche. Here he lived a life of quiet artistic pleasure, eagerly sought after by visitors to the town, from whom he, in his turn, was glad to hear news of the outside world, especially news of the success of his own works. In 1783, he had a visit from Reichardt, who, like himself, was intimate with Klopstock, and Gluck insisted on opening his piano and singing, in his always harsh and now feeble voice, some of the *Odes* and the *Hermannsschlacht*. The conversation afterwards ran on France, and the bitterness of Gluck's references to the French showed that he never forgave them for the slight they had offered him in the rejection of *Echo et Narcisse*.

One more work, *Le Jugement dernier*, he did enter upon with Salieri, but the end was near. Three times already he had been seized with apoplexy, and he had been leading a valetudinarian existence for some time, drinking the waters and observing a strict régime. He took a pathetically broken farewell of Salieri in 1786, the old man's speech breaking helplessly into three languages :

“Ainsi, mon cher ami lei parte domani per

Parigi Je vous souhaite di cuore un bon voyage Sie gehen in eine Stadt, wo man die fremden Künstler schätzt e lei farà onore ich zweifle nicht Ci scriva, mais bien souvent."

The end came in November 1787. On the 15th of that month he was entertaining two friends from Paris; during the absence of his wife, who had gone to prepare the carriage for his daily drive, he insisted on drinking liqueurs that had been forbidden him, and within half an hour of that time he was seized with a fourth attack, and died without recovering consciousness, at the age of seventy-three. On the 17th he was interred in the cemetery of Matzleinsdorf, in a plain and humble grave, that was discovered in 1844, bearing the simple inscription: "Here lies an honest German, a good Christian, and a faithful husband, Christopher, Chevalier Gluck, master in the art of music; died 15th November 1787." By his side his widow was afterwards laid; her epitaph is curiously in contrast with the brevity of his:

"Here lies, by the side of her husband, Marie Anna Elde von Gluck, née Pergin. She was a good Christian and the secret friend of the poor. Loved and appreciated by all who knew her, she ended her life at the age of seventy-one, not without having generously rewarded those who merited it. She died, 12th March 1800. This monument to her has been erected by her grateful nephew, Charles von Gluck, in testimony of his profound veneration." Evidently Frau Gluck's reputation for charity eclipsed that of her husband; his will runs: "I leave to the Institu-

tion for the needy, one florin ; to the General Hospital, one florin ; to the Town Hospital, one florin ; to the Normal School, one florin ; in all four florins." Whether this curious testament was prompted by his desire to leave the disposition of his fortune in the hands of his wife, or merely by pure miserliness, cannot be known ; certainly Gluck was not lacking in worldly goods.

The last act in the drama in which Gluck and Piccinni had figured as antagonists was the proposal by the latter to do honour to the memory of his illustrious rival by founding an annual concert, at which nothing should be performed but the German master's music. "You know," he wrote in the *Journal de Paris*, * "that this art, which owes perhaps its charms to its mobility, and which requires, I dare to say, a kind of inconstancy in its forms, changes in a nation in proportion as it becomes perfected or diffused. Perhaps that need of variety, that has so corrupted art in Italy, will seize upon you here, and your music of forty years hence will no longer resemble that which pleases you to-day. The institution I propose will have the further advantage of recalling to our composers the principles of the arts and the kind of truth that is required in music. The image of the grand models Gluck has left us will preserve for those who shall succeed him the character and method of dramatic music, in which the genius of this great composer especially lay."† The pro-

* 15th December 1787.

† Desnoiresterres, p. 393.

posal, however, after much discussion, came to nothing.*

Gluck's personal character shows itself both in his music and in his physical structure. To the last he was the hardy, virile peasant, trained to rough and sturdy habits of life. In his face can be clearly seen those qualities that appear again in his music and in his correspondence; the head is thrown back proudly and confidently; the large and mobile mouth has an air of quick intelligence; and the eyes look out straight and fearlessly upon the beholder. He was a man whose native strength often showed itself un-

* An interesting light on the relative estimates in which Gluck and Piccinni were held by the lovers of Italian music is to be had in Grimm's remarks on this letter of Piccinni. One phrase in the letter was to the effect that "the lyrical theatre owes to this great composer what the French stage owes to Corneille." On this Grimm remarks: "If the revolution effected by the Chevalier Gluck on our lyrical stage, if the character of his genius, the asperity of his productions, the sublimity of his ideas, the incoherence, the triviality, we may say, of these at times, offer strong points of resemblance between him and the father of the French theatre, it is not less true that the opera owes to Piccinni what the French stage owes to the inimitable Racine; that purity, that uninterrupted elegance of style, that exquisite sensibility so characteristic of the author of *Phèdre*, which we do not find either in Gluck or in the great Corneille, and which constitutes the charm of the compositions of Piccinni, as it will eternally constitute the charm of the verses of Racine." (Grimm's "Mémoires," 1813, vol. iv. pp. 120-126.)

pleasantly, as in his frequently harsh relations with other men ; but this native uncompromising strength was absolutely necessary to the man who should effect the reform of the opera. Different from Wagner, less nervously constituted, less self-conscious, he yet did a work which, though it cannot be compared to Wagner's in real depth of importance, yet marks him out far above any musical figure of his time. How closely he shared the ideals and the fallacies of his age will be shown in the following analysis of his method.

PART II

GLUCK'S RELATIONS TO THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF HIS EPOCH

CHAPTER I

GLUCK's career began at an epoch when the opera had already run a comparatively lengthy course ; at the time of his death it had been in existence in Europe for nearly two hundred years. In that time many changes had come over it, many new impulses had sprung up within it, and it had been modified from without by many social and intellectual forces ; in less than a century, in fact, after its birth in Florence, it had altered so completely that it would scarcely have met with recognition from its founders.

1. The art-form that was subsequently to develop into the modern opera had sprung up in Italy among a set of refined scholars, imbued with all the antique erudition of the Renaissance, who wished to give to music something of the living dignity it was thought to have possessed in connection with the Greek drama. Antiquarians are now agreed that it was towards the

end of the sixteenth century that the opera, in the sense in which we employ the term, really had its birth. It is true that for generations previously there had been entertainments of which music formed an essential part ; our knowledge of performances of this kind goes back at least to 1350. But the musical portions of these entertainments were for the most part merely intermezzi inserted casually between different parts of the spoken portion, and were, of course, entirely in the madrigal style then so much in vogue. It was appropriately enough in Florence, which had a healthier and more secular intellectual life than either Rome, Venice or Naples, that the spirit of revolt against the older religious forms had birth. In 1579, during the festivities attending the marriage of Francesco I., Duke of Tuscany, and Bianca Capello, some music by Merullo and Gabrieli was performed, which impressed many people by the utter incongruity between its own slow solemnity and the dithyrambic words to which it was set. It was at the house of Count Bardi that a number of enthusiasts gathered together, from whose meditations sprang the ancestor of the modern opera. Galilei set the "Ugolino" section from Dante's *Purgatorio* to music for one voice with a viola accompaniment, and followed this up with a setting of the Lamentations of Jeremiah. It was, however, in 1594 that Jacopo Peri and Caccini set to music the *Dafne* of Rinuccini, and laid therein the foundations of modern opera. In 1600, the same scholars collaborated in *Euridice*, which was even more successful than the previous work. The new music found a goodly number of imitators ; and

how deeply the musical world was stirred by the new style may be seen from the controversial literature that at once sprang up about it.* Peri's avowed purpose in the new dramatic monodies which he wrote was stated in the preface to *Euridice*, published at Venice. There he tells us "how he was led to the discovery of the new and vital style in music. He says that in studying the drama of the ancients he felt convinced that they had adopted a tone of expression other than that of everyday speech, which, though never rising into song, was nevertheless musically coloured. This induced him to observe carefully the various manners of speaking in daily life, and these he endeavoured to reproduce in music as faithfully as he could. Soft and gentle speech he interpreted by half-spoken, half-sung tones on a sustained instrumental base; feelings of a deeper emotional kind by a melody with greater intervals and a lively tempo, the accompanying instrumental harmonies changing more frequently. Sometimes he employed dissonance." †

From this time the opera advanced with almost incredible rapidity, owing, perhaps, more to Monteverde than to any other man since Jacopo Peri. Monteverde, besides increasing the dramatic scope of the recitative, gave new life to the orchestra, and introduced several new effects, such as the *tremolo* and the *pizzicato* in the strings. His *Orfeo* (1607) contains the first musical dramatic duet. Cavalli (1599-1676),

* See Naumann, "History of Music" (English translation), vol. i. p. 521.

† Naumann, i. 524.

a pupil of Monteverde, "introduced word-repetition into his ariettas—a proceeding hitherto disapproved of by the Florentine school."

It is evident from this rapid sketch that the opera from the very beginning, and by the very nature of its beginning, was a form of art destined to many and peculiar vicissitudes. It was strained and artificial from the start; it owed its origin to no contemporary stress of feeling, but was simply a conscious and deliberate attempt to cast the Renaissance thought and emotion into the mould of the antique. How much harm, in the midst of so much good, was actually wrought by the Renaissance, it is not easy to estimate. It is certain that the virile art and literature of Greece, bursting as they did upon the weaker æsthetic sense of the Europe of that day, tended to some extent to impede the growth of the very spirit they themselves had roused. It was the adoration of the antique that was the least satisfactory part of the Italian Renaissance; and it was of this adoration that the opera was born. It was not an art springing from the desire to express new moods in a form born of the moods themselves, but a calm attempt on the part of a few scholars, saturated with the antique, to revive what they were pleased to call "the music of the Greeks." Study of the Greek dramatists and scholiasts had convinced them that music, in some form or other, was an integral part of the dramas of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; and as these works represented to them the highest achievements of dramatic art, no attempt to resuscitate the drama in their own day could be thoroughly successful without a resuscitation at the

same time of that music which had been so inseparable from the drama at Athens. The members of the Florentine Academy never paused to consider whether the dramatic work of the Europe of the sixteenth century had anything in common with the Greek drama; whether the music of modern Europe was music at all in the sense which that word bore for an Athenian of the fifth century B.C.; whether, therefore, the relation between the poetry and music of Athens was anything like the relation between the poetry and the music of their own day; and finally, whether anything could be really known of the music of the Greeks. These considerations did not occur to them; they were less artists than scholars, and their sole aim was to bring upon the stage of the sixteenth century a form of union of poetry and music which they believed to have been the form of union between these arts in the drama of the Greeks.* And this

* Peri, in his preface to *Euridice*, says that the object of the Florentine reformers was "to try the power of this species of melody, which they imagined to be such as was used by the ancient Greeks and Romans throughout their dramas." And Guidotti, the editor of Cavaliere's *Dell'anima e del corpo*—another of the works in the new style—says it consists of "singular and new musical compositions, made in imitation of that style with which the ancient Greeks and Romans are supposed to have produced such great effects by their dramatic representations." (See Burney, "History of Music," iv. 18.) Even in the eighteenth century the question was still laboriously discussed whether the ancient or the modern music created the greater effect.

union mainly resolved itself, for them, into an accompaniment of the words of the drama by musical declamation.*

The spirit of imitation of the antique, that had thus called the opera into being in Italy, controlled also its choice of subject, causing this to be taken, as a rule, from the scenes and personages of the Greek mythology. Dealing as it thus did with the ghostly forms of dead antiquity, it was bound to suffer both in content and in expression. Had there been sufficient originality of thought in Italy at that time to give any life to dramatic poetry, the intellectual conditions would have been such that opera, in the sense of imitation of the antique, would have been unable to maintain itself for long; but Italy was too weak to give birth to any original dramatic art, and there was no healthier native product to drive out this bastard growth, the offspring of weak modernity upon misunderstood antiquity. So that the opera, growing as it did out of a purely stagnant culture, took the only course that was open to it, and became the toy first of the Courts, afterwards of the public. It was necessarily monotonous and inexpansive in the vocal portions; and so, almost from the very first, recourse had to be had to magnificent

* The abbé Grillo wrote to Caccini in 1609: "You are the father of a new order of music, or rather of a style of melody which is not melody, a recitative-melody, noble in character and surpassing the songs of the people; not altering the words nor depriving them of their life and sentiment, but, on the contrary, augmenting them and giving them great meaning and force." (See Ludovic Celler, "*Les Origines de l'Opéra*," p. 334.)

decorations and scenery, to atone for the lack of sensuous excitement in the story itself.*

Then, in process of time, the opera passed from the Courts to the public ; instead of being a spectacle used merely on the occasion of princely festivities, it became the amusement of the ordinary theatre-goer. And at this point of its development it underwent a change that was of vital importance in its subsequent history. It began, as we have seen, as a form of art in which a kind of musical declamation, with a simple instrumental accompaniment, was superimposed upon the words of the play. Had the learned theorists of the Florentine Academy been less intent upon the music of the Greeks, they might have seen among the country people around them a form of union between poetry and music that was much more natural, more modern, and more pleasing to the ear than the carefully reasoned system of declamation of Jacopo Peri and his fellows. There, if anywhere, was the germ of a genuine musical drama, that should take *modern* poetical feeling and *modern* musical feeling and technique, and by a spontaneous co-ordination of them should give birth to an art that would be related as naturally to modern dramatic ideas as the

* See Algarotti, "Versuche über die Architectur, etc.," p. 227. The decorations of course found their way into the opera in the first place from the masque, and were the inevitable amusement of an idle Court in a relatively low stage of culture. On the magnificence of the display in the early operas see Grove's "Dictionary of Music," art. "Opera ;" and on the masques see Burckhardt's "Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy," pp. 415-418.

Greek dramatic form was related to Greek ideas. It was really no more consistent of the Italian scholars to attempt to force upon modern emotions the forms of antiquity, than it was of the English university scholars of the same epoch to attempt to crush our growing English tongue into the fetters of the antique prosodial rules. The same danger that had beset Italy beset England also. Here too the Renaissance threatened for a time to make literature derivative and imitative in quality rather than native and spontaneous ; but from various causes England escaped the danger of a slavish admiration of antiquity. The student of the Shakespearian drama knows how, for a time, the finest intellects of the nation spent themselves in endeavouring to mould English tragedy in the fashion of the antique ; and how criticism, such as that of Sir Philip Sidney in his "Defence of Poesie," equally looked upon Greek and Latin dramas as the only models worthy to be followed, and regretted the signs of an unruly tendency in English dramatists to set the classical rules at nought. The growing romanticism of feeling in England, however, made it finally impossible for contemporary art to restrict itself within the formulas of antiquity ; while the wave of classical imitation that England struggled through and rose triumphant from, entirely swamped the weaker spirit of Italy. Yet though to the shaping of the opera at the commencement there went only the fastidious preferences of antique-souled scholars, and though the union of poetry and music that was already among the people was passed by in contemptuous indifference, it was this form of union—or rather the spirit of it—that

ultimately prevailed. The Nemesis came when the opera passed from the courts to the public at large. From the very nature of the case, this system of arid declamation could only hope for length of days among scholars who would be content to forego the sensuous delights of music, in consideration of the greater satisfaction they felt at the idea of having resuscitated the long-lost "music of the Greeks."

But the general theatrical public, Gallio-like, cared for none of these things. They were indifferent to Euripides and Seneca, and knew nothing of Aristotle and Longinus. They demanded simply pleasure from the theatre, and as their healthy instincts began to assert themselves, the Florentine declamation gave way to a form of union between music and poetry more like that which had always existed among the people, who did not breathe the musty air of libraries, and to whom the Greek drama was a thing uncared-for and unknown. At a later time this naturalistic spirit actually came to play a considerable part in shaping one of the most delightful species of musical art—the *opera buffa*; for this was in reality the musical analogue of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, a form of rural comedy that had existed from time immemorial among the people, and that had been absolutely untouched by the new spirit of the Renaissance. And when, in the seventeenth century, the opera was settled upon the theatrical stage, it was inevitable that the old ideal of declamation should be partly put away, and that both composers and audience should take delight in new melodic freedom and harmonic richness. To this another circumstance contributed. The director of a

theatre, not having at his command the vast pecuniary resources of the Courts, and being thus unable to provide the same magnificence of scenic display, was compelled to hold out to his patrons a bait of equal or greater attractiveness in the shape of superb singing.* Thus began what musical historians have called "the reign of the singers." This movement, which has generally been regarded as a retrogression of the musical drama, a falling from the high and rigorous ideal of the Florentine Academicians, was in reality a much-needed movement towards freedom and spontaneity of expression. The musical drama needed this; for, as has already been shown, the form of opera projected by Peri and his associates was both imitative and artificial in itself, and had the further demerit of passing over the more fundamentally natural form of union between poetry and music that was already in existence among the people. That this movement towards naturalism and lyric freedom, which probably had its origin in Naples, was carried too far, and ultimately became thoroughly vicious and harmful, is regrettable from the point of view of a later time; but the fact remains, that had the much-abused "reign of the singers" not come, or, to speak more accurately, had the lyrical principle implied by this domination not asserted itself, the opera would have missed one great motive force that gave it incalculable assistance in its movement towards modernity and freedom. It was not that the lyrical flood was evil in itself; the evil consisted in losing sight of the grain of truth that

* See Algarotti, p. 229.

was really contained in the plan of the founders of the opera—the truth that some provision must be made for an exceptional kind of union between poetry and music in those cases where the words do not demand, or indeed suggest, a copiousness of lyrical fervour ; that is, some other musical form, interesting in itself, would have to be devised for carrying on the main business of the opera between the soli, duets and *ensembles*. The great defect of the lyrical movement was that it became too exclusively and too facilely lyrical ; it cared for sensuous pleasure and for little more ; and recitative became in consequence unutterably degraded. Here, of course, we have to seek the explanation in the social and political circumstances of the time. The Italy of that and later days was utterly incapable of such an interest in life as would have led to the creation of a genuine humanistic drama. The letters from Italy of the Président de Brosses show all too clearly the flaccid intellectual life of the time, and convince us that in such an environment it was impossible for the opera to be more than a fashionable lounge for the idle public.* The desire for a musical drama that should be poetically interesting throughout would have implied an audience capable of taking a continuous dramatic interest in the play ; and such an audience did not then exist in Italy. To take an intellectual interest in opera would have been an almost unheard-of thing for either composers or

* See De Brosses : “ L’Italie Galante et Familiale,” *passim* ; and the testimony of Algarotti, *op. cit.* pp. 261, 267.

audience ; they asked for nothing more than passive sensuous enjoyment. *

2. In Germany the course of the opera had been for the most part similar to its course in Italy. It quickly became popular there, more especially at the

* In the foregoing brief *résumé* of the course of the opera in Italy, the culture-side of the development has alone been looked at. The reader who wishes to supplement this with a view of the formal evolution of music *per se* during this epoch, and the changes from the madrigalesque style to the specifically modern manner, may consult Dr. Parry's excellent account in his "Art of Music," or any of the good histories of the opera. As bearing on the question of the sudden lyrical orgasm that seemed to come upon Italy in the early years of the seventeenth century, and the subsequent development of the buffo forms of opera, it is noticeable that an analogous sociological situation had come about at an earlier epoch in the *Commedia dell'Arte*—the ancient comedy of the people, the real antiquity of which can scarcely be estimated. It is certain that the great vogue of the *Commedia dell'Arte* in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries was due to its affording the down-trodden Italian populace a refuge from their political and social sorrows. They played at gaiety in order not to realise that they should be sad. Thus in the second quarter of the sixteenth century we have one of the players and writers of the Comedy of Masks—Angelo Beolco, surnamed Ruzzante—giving his reasons for adopting this rude form of dramatic representation. "The world is no longer what it was," he writes. "There is nothing but slaughter and famine ; in the fields there is no longer any sound of laughter and singing ; the young people no longer make

Courts; and it was one sign of the intellectual weakness of Germany at this time that the opera took root there in Italian, instead of in the native tongue.* Artistic princes and dilettante barons thought their possessions incomplete without an Italian opera-troupe. The performances were generally in Italian, the singers and conductors were for the most part Italians; the poets

love and marry; we seem choked by the plague in our throats; the very nightingale no longer sings as in former days; happy are the dead quiet underground. Let us therefore, since we cannot cry freely, laugh in our misery." (Quoted in Vernon Lee's "Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy," p. 235.) On the sociological side of the dramatic forms in Italy, see also Burckhardt's "Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy," pp. 315-321; and on the condition of the Italian people in the seventeenth century, see an eloquent passage in Vernon Lee's book, pp. 241, 242. The great growth of the *buffo* forms in the seventeenth century, and the rapid rise of the melodic style, were phenomena intimately related to the social life of the time; and this popular element in music certainly did more for opera than the efforts after the antique on the part of the Florentine academicians. On the greater naturalness of the *buffo* order, see Algarotti, pp. 251, 252.

* In 1627 the drama of *Dafne* was translated from the Italian, set to music by Schütz, and performed at Dresden. The first German performance of opera on a public stage was in 1678, when Theile's *Adam and Eve* was given at Hamburg in the German language. For the most part, however, the recitatives alone were in German, and the arias, which were looked upon as the really important parts of an opera, were sung in Italian. See Burney, "History of Music," iii. 577.

and composers were either Italians or men who had been educated in Italy, and who had acquired so much of that fatal facility of imitation as enabled them to turn out work after work of merely mechanical construction ; and the subjects in Germany, as in Italy, were mainly drawn from classical mythology. The northern nations were no more capable than the southern of creating and maintaining a contemporary drama ; in every direction they spent such energy as they possessed in imitation and convention.

At the end of the seventeenth century, indeed, Germany could not be credited with the possession of an indigenous literature. Hindered by the difference in local dialects and by a general lack of intellectual stamina, she could attain to nothing more than a few cold and spiritless imitations of the French and the Greek. A new wave of intellectual energy passed over the country at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the literature that grouped round Leibnitz gave some promise of the richer flood that was shortly to pour over northern Germany. Gottsched, though he detested the English drama and modelled his style on Racine, yet had the merit of wishing to see a truly national literature in Germany ; and the celebrated controversy between him and Bodmer—the leader of the opposite party and the champion of Milton—though puerile enough in our eyes, gave a noteworthy stimulus to literary discussion and to culture. And with a quickening intellectual life in the universities, the way was being prepared for the great revival in the middle of the century under Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, and Kant. With this awakening in

literature came a simultaneous awakening in music, and a similar note of humanistic culture is heard in both of them. One result of the Thirty Years' War had been to throw the German mind more thoroughly upon itself; a deeply emotional nation, in its hours of depression, develops an internal world of melancholy and pious resignation. Hence the literature was for a long time intensely religious and the philosophy wholly mystical; and the spirit that blossomed into the hymnals of the seventeenth century lived on into the eighteenth, and culminated in the work of John Sebastian Bach. He, indeed, was dominated almost entirely by this mysticism, which gave to his music throughout a character of intensive, melancholy longing. Beyond all other composers he is the psychologist of the soul in its moments of placid claustral seclusion. Handel, with more virility of temperament, and a mind strengthened and braced by constant intercourse with the world, helped to make music more thoroughly humanistic. He is less of the cloister than Bach; he has the strength that comes from the buffetings of nature; there is a tension, a fibre of oppugnancy in his music, that is absent from the work of the quiet old Cantor. Handel, though his finest compositions were written to religious words, yet gives to all his music a broader and more genuinely humanistic character than appears in the work of Bach. In Handel, although his own operas were destined to be held in little more account than the current operawriting of his day, music reaches out so superbly to human life, and gives such strong and vibrant utterance to the deeper emotions, that it was receiving the best

possible preparation for its later task of dramatic expression.* And what was religious mysticism in Bach, and religious humanism in Handel, became in Gluck the broadest secular humanism: his artist's eye was turned solely on men as men, on human passion solely as human passion.

Even in the dark times of the Italian domination, Germany had not been lying idle; even then the firm, sincere, musical sense of the nation had been groping after a saner ideal than that of the south. It was natural, of course, that French and Italian methods should underlie most of the German opera-work of that day; but in several places, notably at Hamburg, various men set themselves the task of making German opera more completely German. Kusser, at the end of the seventeenth century, did good work at Hamburg, although his style was mainly foreign in intention; and he must have greatly influenced Keiser (1673-1739), who made more for earnestness in opera than any German before Gluck. Keiser shared his countrymen's passion for the oratorio and cantata, and the seriousness of purpose and of execution required by these forms of art imported itself also into his

* It is curious to what a slight extent Handel influenced the later forms of music. As Mr. A. J. Balfour has well expressed it, "his works form, as it were, a monument, solitary and colossal, raised at the end of some blind avenue from which the true path of advance has already branched; a monument which, stately and splendid though it be, is not the vestibule through which art has passed to the discovery and exploration of new regions of beauty." ("Essays and Addresses," p. 122.)

dramatic work. He based his airs less on the Italian form than on the German *lied*, at the same time giving greater care to the recitative; and as he wrote operas to German words, he had all the more opportunities to give a characteristically German expression to his music. He pondered much over his art, somewhat in the manner of Gluck, and expounded his views in a preface to a collection of airs from his *Almira and Octavia*, published at Hamburg in 1706.* Like Gluck, he set his face against the abuse of contrapuntal devices in opera, and avowed his desire to deliver German music from the influence of the "protzigen Italiener und prahlerischen Franzosen." Characteristically, German is his dictum that "nicht durch Kunst, wohl aber durch Erfahrung," can the composer alone hope to do enduring work.

Keiser, however, and his successor Telemann (1681-1767), were greatly hindered by the scenic display of the opera, which in Germany, as in France and Italy, went to such proportions as almost to eclipse the work of both poet and musician, the true lords of the opera frequently being the decorator and the machinist. The gravity and naturalness of Keiser were, in fact, only importations from the *lied* and the oratorio, and were powerless for good in face of the increasing popularity of Italian music. Italians like Agostino Steffani

* The preface is not actually by Keiser, but by Feind. The ideas, however, are Keiser's, in the same way that the ideas in the preface to *Alceste* are Gluck's. For an excellent account of the opera in Germany, see Reissmann's "Illustrierte Geschichte der deutschen Musik."

(1650–1730) settled themselves in Germany, and won riches and position as composers and conductors; Italians like Zeno and Metastasio provided the libretti; while the most popular German operatic writers before Gluck—Hasse, Graun and Naumann—modelled their style upon that of the Neapolitan school, which was then the most brilliant in Europe. Graun, indeed, had something of Keiser's depth and seriousness, and his airs sometimes showed the influence of the earlier master. He had a training in technique equal to that of Handel, but his talent was predominantly lyrical, and his aria-writing was the finest and most expressive portion of his work. Graun, however, was unable to break away from the current Italian tradition; and not only the bulk of his operatic compositions, but even the greater part of his oratorio *Der Tod Jesu*, is in the style of the Italian opera.

A further sign of dramatic degradation was the growing vogue of *pasticcio* operas, made by patching together a number of airs and duets, sometimes from the works of one composer, frequently from the works of several. The time for the German emancipation had not yet come. All the real strength of the nation spent itself in religious music; secular art was left to French and Italian degradation. It was reserved for Gluck to bring high seriousness of purpose from the church into the theatre.

3. In France, the course of the opera was different from what it had been either in Italy or in Germany. The ballet—a medley of dances, song, dialogue and chorus—had long been a popular French form of

entertainment, particularly at the Courts; and the French opera had really sprung up out of this.

As early as 1581, on the occasion of the marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse with Mdlle. de Vaudemont, a work of this kind was given, entitled *Le ballet comique de la rayne, rempli de diverses divises, mascarades, chansons de musique et autres gentillesses*; the words were by Baltazarini, the music by Beaulieu and Salomon. The first French opera, in the ordinary sense of the word, was *La pastorale* (1659), the words of which were by the Abbé Perrin, and the music by Cambert; and so successful does this appear to have been that it was quickly followed by others by the same composer. Some impetus was given to dramatic composition in France by the king's letter of 1668, giving Perrin the exclusive right of these performances; three years after, the first opera-house was built in Paris, and opened with a pastoral, *Pomona*, the words again being by Perrin and the music by Cambert. A new craftsman, however, had by this time appeared upon the scene; one who was destined to give so forward an impulse to the French opera as to have his name erroneously coupled with it as its founder. In the same year that saw the production of *Pomona*, Perrin delegated his privilege to Lully, an Italian by birth, but a Frenchman in feelings and ideas. He opened his reign at the theatre with *Les fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus*, the words being a pasticcio from the ballets of Quinault. Then, in 1673, came the first real step towards the consolidation of the opera, in the production of *Cadmus*, — a *tragédie lyrique* in five acts; the poetry by

Quinault, the music by Lully. They co-operated in several other works: *Alceste* (1673), *Theseus* (1675), *Carnaval* (1675), *Atys* (1676), *Isis* (1677), *Persée* (1682), *Phaëton* (1683), *Amadis* (1684), *Roland* (1685), *Armida* (1686), &c.; while for some time Lully worked with Thomas Corneille, producing *Psyche* (1678), and *Bellerophon* (1679).

From the beginning French opera was peculiarly hampered both in form and in expression. Its courtly origin imposed some strangely rigid necessities upon it. Its subjects it of course drew from classical mythology or from the romances of chivalry, following the fashion of the time; and though the opera was everywhere employed as a medium for flattery of potentates, in France this adulation was so gross, and dominated the opera so completely, that it may almost be said that everything was sacrificed to this.* The mode of working followed by Lully is an indication of the prevailing taste in opera in the Paris of the seventeenth century, and at the same time a revelation of the difficulties with which French opera had always to contend. In selecting the story from Greek or Roman mythology, special care of course had to be taken that everything should be favourable to flattery of the monarch. To this end, several subjects were submitted to the judgment of Louis; the one selected

* On the influence of Louis' "protection" upon the French intellect of the time, the reader may consult Buckle's "History of Civilisation," vol. i. chap. xi. Buckle is historically right in his condemnation of the protective spirit, though his sociological conclusion is of course open to question.

by him was then passed on to Lully, whose first business was to plan out the decorations and the dances. It next came into the poet's hand, and after his portion of the work had been approved by the Academy, Lully set it to music, making, however, any change that suggested itself to him. Thus music was really quite a secondary thing in the early French opera. Dances and decorations played a very large part in it, and when we consider the tone of French social and intellectual life at that time, and the high contemporary development of the specialised art of poetry, it is easy to conceive how the verbal substratum came to bulk more largely in importance than the music. There was in France none of the sensuous lyrical outpouring that had so strangely and so rapidly transformed the Italian opera. In his recitative, Lully reduced music almost to a minimum. He did not attempt to dominate it, either in time, in rhythm, or in intervals, by specifically musical feeling; he characterised it instead by a method that consisted in accentuating the metrical and prosodial elements of the words themselves. It is a well-known peculiarity of music that it makes light of the relationship of words and syllables and accents as these occur in ordinary speech or in poetry, claiming to do this by the fact of its addressing a higher rhythmical and accentual sense than is appealed to in poetry or in prose; and this music does even in usual recitative, where at least some pretence is made to give a musical pleasure over and above the mere intellectual significance of the words. There is very little of this in Lully; what he does in recitative is to follow closely

the accent of the words, and even rigidly to retain the verbal rhythm by frequent changes of time—moving from common time to $\frac{3}{4}$ time and back again, every few words, thus: | Vous passez sans me | voir ; craignez-vous ma pré | -sence ? Je vous aime Thé | -one, et ce soupçon m'offense. Que ma veuë aujourd'hui vo' cause d'embar | -ras, Avouëz qu'en ces | lieux vous ne me cherchiez | pas ? Je cherchais la Reyne," &c.*

Naturally, a similar method of procedure was employed in the airs. There was little or no feeling in them ; being often intended mainly for the adulation of the monarch or his favourites, they were lavishly besprinkled with witty or sententious sayings that defied emotional treatment. The aria was thus restricted to more or less conventional forms, and the music was added to the words with little thought of their essential inappropriateness for it. So characterless, indeed, were Lully's melodies, that they were easily applicable to the most dissimilar circumstances ; and it is related of Guion that when in prison at Vincennes, he employed his time in writing mystical hymns to these operatic melodies of Lully.† The relations of the composer towards music in the opera were in fact very ill-defined. The art being still almost in its infancy, it was difficult for it to struggle

* Scene from *Phaëton*, quoted from Reissmann, "C. W. von Gluck," p. 94. Reissmann erroneously prints *sous* for *vous* as the first word. The recitative commences in common time, and then successively changes to $\frac{3}{4}$ time and back again.

† Reissmann, p. 96.

against the combined influences of a society that was essentially anti-musical in culture, and a powerful and well-developed poetical drama.*

Yet something of the same inevitable change which we noticed in Italy took place here also. For some time recitative remained where Lully had left it, and the opera was on the whole conducted on the lines laid down by him. It was in this spirit that his sons Louis and Jean Louis worked, as well as his pupil Colasse. But Marais (1650-1718) improved the aria slightly, giving it a greater lyrical expansiveness and a closer dramatic coherence; and a similar tendency was apparent in the other men who took up the opera at that time—Desmarets, Campra, Destouches and others. In process of time the French aria began to assume the Italian style, and from such dangers to dramatic expression as lay in this assimilation the French aria was delivered by Rameau (1683-1764), who commenced his operatic career at the age of fifty-one. Rameau as a musician was in every way superior to Lully. He gave greater significance to the recitative, and brought the aria round from its seductive Italian form to the older French style, only retaining so much of the Italian method as was necessary to give a finer freedom to the melody. That he consciously strove to produce a more truly national aria is shown by his

* For a brilliant study of the intellectual world of the time of Louis XIV., see Taine's article on Racine in his "Nouveaux Essais." Naumann ("History of Music," i. 597, 598) summarises Lully's qualities and defects very well, but fails utterly to correlate them with the intellectual conditions of his time.

use of the phrase *Air italien* whenever he uses the Italian form in its entirety. Added to this, his orchestration, his counterpoint, his rhythm, and his treatment of the chorus all showed an advance on Lully ; and it was probably the dramatic nature of his rhythm that attracted the attention of Gluck during his Parisian visit of 1745.

The performances of the Italian Bouffons in Paris in 1752 revealed to the astonished ears of the French a kind of music of the possibilities of which they had previously had little conception.

As we have seen, the Italian *opera buffa* was in many respects a healthier and more natural growth than the *opera seria* ; it was more cognate with the real feelings of that portion of the Italian people that had escaped the impulse of classical imitation during the Renaissance ; and it steered clear of much of the solemn and inflated absurdity of the serious opera. What recommended the work of Pergolesi, Atella, Jomelli and their fellows to the French public of 1752, however, was their free, expansive and seductive melody, and the genial atmosphere that pervaded the whole music ; it must have been felt as a dear-bought relief from the turgid declamation or the monotonous plain-song of many of the native compositions. The literary war that sprang up over the Bouffons, as, at a later time, over the music of Gluck, was an indication of how deeply the sense of the French theatrical public was stirred ; and the new impulse communicated by the visit of the Italians undoubtedly influenced French music for good. The French were already possessed of an *opéra comique* with many pleasing

points, and the warmer style and more spontaneous handling of the Italians were now communicated to it; the work of Duni, Monsigny, and Grétry would certainly not have been so charming as it was, had the war of the Buffonists and anti-Buffonists never taken place.* And the healthier and more spontaneous spirit that thus gave life to the comic *genre* found its way also into the department of serious opera, influencing it for good. French music on the whole was, however, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, a subject of scorn for all Europe, which was then fascinated by the Italian style. "The long and pertinacious attachment to the style of Lulli and his imitators in vocal compositions," writes Burney, "to the exclusion of those improvements which were making in the art in other parts of Europe during the first fifty years of this century, have doubtless more impeded its progress than want of genius in this active and lively people, or defects in their language, to which Rousseau and others have ascribed the imperfections of their music." And again: "When the French, during the last century, were so contented with the music of Lully, it was nearly as good as that of other countries, and better patronised and supported by the most splendid prince in Europe. But this nation, so frequently accused of more volatility and caprice than

* The war between the Italian and the French schools was really much older than 1752. Fifty years before that time there had appeared a "Parallèle des Italiens et des Français en ce qui regarde la Musique et l'Opéra," by the Abbé Ragueneau, which was answered furiously by Freneuse. See Burney, "History of Music," iv. 608.

their neighbours, have manifested a steady persevering constancy to their music, which the strongest ridicule and contempt of other nations could never vanquish.* And again: "Indeed, the French seem now the only people in Europe, except the Italians, who, in their dramas, have a music of their own. The serious opera of Paris is still in the trammels of Lully and Rameau, though every one who goes there either yawns or laughs, except when roused or amused by the dances and decorations. As a *spectacle*, this opera is often superior to any in Europe; but as *music*, it is below our country psalmody, being without time, tune, or expression that any but French ears can bear; indeed, the point is so much given up by the French themselves, that nothing but a kind of national pride, in a few individuals, keeps the dispute alive; the rest frankly confess themselves ashamed of their own music."†

Such was the verdict given upon French music by a cultured *bon vivant* of the last century.

Surveying the whole field of opera at the time, it is evident that it had come to an *impasse*. The comic opera was too restricted in subject and method, and too far removed from the deeper thought of the time, to win for itself any great place in the intellectual world; while the serious opera was such a mass of absurdities and anomalies, so vitiated by bad libretti and degraded by the unhappy facility of numberless insignificant

* Burney, "History of Music," iv. 607, 610.

† Burney, "Present State of Music in Germany, &c.," 1773, i. 54.

composers, that it was almost everywhere a byword and laughing-stock to the wise, an object of contempt for those who were not musical by nature, and an object of regret for those who were.*

* In the *Revue des deux Mondes* for 15th July of this year there is an article by M. René Doumic on "L'Opéra et la Tragédie au xviième Siècle," à propos of a recently published volume on the "Histoire de l'Opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti," by M. Romain Rolland. M. Doumic's article is an excellent study, from the non-musical side, of the connection between the opera and the drama in the seventeenth century. He notes the artificial nature of the opera-cult of the time: "Le goût de l'opéra est au xviième siècle une forme de la manie de l'exotisme. Il rallie tous les 'snobs' de l'époque. . . . Une cour galante, le monde élégant, les femmes et les marquis, tous les doucereux et les enjoués, ceux qui préfèrent le 'vain plaisir' aux jouissances de l'esprit, ceux qui ne demandent à l'art que de les amuser, tels sont ceux pour qui se prépare et au gré de qui se façonne le divertissement de l'opéra. C'est le triomphe de l'influence mondaine." He shows that the opera even infected the poetical tragedy of the time, and led to aberrations on the part of Corneille and Racine, and quotes Grimm in evidence of the unpsychological nature of opera and its inferiority to tragedy: "Le merveilleux visible," says Grimm, "n'aurait-il pas banni tout intérêt de la scène lyrique? Un dieu peut étonner, il peut paraître grand et redoutable; mais peut-il intéresser? Son caractère de divinité ne rompt-il pas toute espèce de liaison et de rapport entre lui et moi?" (Compare also Dryden's preface to "Albion and Albanus," and a surprisingly good statement of the weakness of the early opera on the psychological side in Rousseau's "Dictionnaire de la Musique," art. "Opéra.") Saint-

Evremond also had fears for the drama: "Ce qui me fâche le plus de l'entêtement où l'on est pour l'opéra, c'est qu'il va ruiner la tragédie, qui est la plus belle chose que nous ayons, la plus propre à élever l'âme et la plus capable de former l'esprit." M. Doumic grows somewhat pessimistic over the future encroachments of the opera, and is inclined to lay to its charge some faults of the modern stage in general and of Victor Hugo's dramas in particular. M. Rolland promises a further volume, showing the influence of the opera on the tragedy of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER II

As we have seen, the one musician who had it within him to reform the opera spent almost half a century of his life before he moulded into enduring concrete form the ideas that had been so gradually taking shape in his brain. It is, of course, impossible to say with any certainty when these ideas first became definite; in all probability they were of quiet and imperceptible growth. It is essential to bear in mind the physical constitution of Gluck, as well as his intellectual surroundings, if we would arrive at an understanding of his work. From all we know of him—his birth, his ancestry, the early conditions of his life, his later relations with men—it is clear that much of his forthright spirit of innovation was simply the intellectual expression of a healthy, vigorous, independent, unsophisticated nature, forcing itself, in spite of all opposition and of every seduction, into the way that was most natural to it; Gluck was merely following the line of least resistance. If his system, to take the most idealistic view of the case, was the outcome of his reflection, this reflection, for the most part, was in turn simply the formulated and conscious expression of the impulses of his physical nature. It was as impossible for a man of his temperament to take up finally with anything but an honest and natural dramatic

system, as it would have been for a Newman to prefer Rationalism to Roman Catholicism, or for a Rossetti to become a devotee of the classics. Physiological necessity was at the bottom of Gluck's rejection of the tawdry unreality of the Italian opera-style of his day.

So that it is as unwise as it is impracticable to attempt to fix any one moment for the genesis of Gluck's reformatory ideas. Co-operating, too, with the personal element of his nature would be the factor of nationality, which would give him, in common with his great German contemporaries, a leaning to earnestness and directness in music rather than to the floreate and aromatic sensuousness of the southern composers. We saw that even in his first opera, composed for the Italian stage, there was a certain northern rigidity and reserve that marked it out as the work of a *tedesco*; and we have had to chronicle, in the operas of his early and middle periods, many indications of the later Gluck—passages where the serious, intensive Teuton showed himself under the counterfeit presentment of an Italian mask. And allowing for the deliberateness of motion of Gluck's mind—for his six great works indicate that his was a cautious, slowly moving intellect—it is certain that he would have attained to greater freedom and naturalness at an earlier period of his career, had it not been for the soul-deadening system of artificiality and commonplace under which he had the misfortune to live. The advocates of aristocratic patronage of art have only to turn their eyes to the music of the eighteenth century to see the evils such a system can work, unless directed by men of the widest knowledge

and utmost catholicity of culture. Music, being the art that ministers most exclusively to sensuous pleasure, found greater difficulty than the other arts in throwing off the burden of commonplace convention that was imposed upon it by its protectors. In the philosophy of the time, the tendency was to break the intellectual fetters that held men in subjection to constituted authority, and to restore to human nature something of the dignity that was thought to be its natural condition. But this spirit of intellectual revolt found scarcely an answering echo in the world of music. The generally degrading system of aristocratic patronage, that almost inevitably sets up false and tawdry ideals in the artist and his public, and is a direct incentive to servility, was in full force in the musical world of the eighteenth century, holding the artist down, narrowing and degrading his ideal, making him more careful to write in accordance with the taste of his patron than with regard to his duties to himself as an artist, and forcing him into the groove of conventionality and facile artifice. It has already been pointed out how this system of patronage left its mark on the composers of the eighteenth century, and how the fact that Gluck gradually rose above it, bears eloquent testimony to his innate independence and virility. Under a happier system, whereby he would have been less dependent for his daily bread upon the pleasure of a patron, he would in all probability have outgrown the follies of the current opera at a much earlier date; that he ever managed to outgrow them, that he ever learned to strike a chord of sincerity in that world of hollow artifice, makes his figure bulk like that of some

solitary giant above the dwarfish forms of his contemporaries.

He was not alone, of course, in his perception of the absurdities and the shortcomings of the opera of the time. Other men before him had called attention to these, some with satirical contempt, like Marcello, others, like Algarotti and Addison, with a genuine desire to base the musical drama on better principles. Marcello's brilliant satire, *Il Teatro alla moda*, is well known; it is an unmerciful exposure of the imbecility of the opera of his day, down even to the minutest details. Every one, again, has heard of the *mot* of the French wit, that when anything was too silly to be said, they sang it; and some of Addison's happiest irony is directed against the follies that strutted the boards in such bombastic pride. D'Alembert, La Bruyère, and Boileau had laughed at the absurdities of the opera, and Panard had thrown them all together into exquisitely humorous verse in his poem, "What I saw at the Opera,"* which for delicacy of satire surpasses Addison. Saint-Evremond, speaking of the opera, had said: "If you wish to know what an opera is, I answer that it is a strange production of poetry and music, where the poet and the musician, each bored by the other, take the utmost possible trouble to produce a worthless performance. A piece of nonsense packed with music, dances, machines, and decorations, is magnificent nonsense, but nonsense all the same." Dryden had stigmatised it in a couplet wherein

* For Panard's poem see Crépet, "Les Poètes Françaises," vol. iii. p. 195.

the opera is made to stand as the type of foolish work :

For what a song or senseless Opera
Is to the living labour of a play,
Or what a play to Virgil's work would be,
Such is a single piece to history.

La Fontaine also satirised the scenic display of the opera, and the occasionally ludicrous miscarriages of the machinery, somewhat in the style of Panard :

Souvent au plus beau char le contrepoids résiste ;
Un dieu pend à la corde et crie au machiniste ;
Un reste de forêt demeure dans la mer,
Ou la moitié de ciel au milieu de l'enfer.

The most remarkable book on the opera, however, was that of Algarotti,* which deserves detailed consideration because of its temperate exposure of the weaknesses of the opera, its anticipation of many later theories, including one or two of Wagner's, and the great similarity between the reforms proposed by him and those actually effected by Gluck, and detailed by the composer in his various papers and letters. The book is consequently of some importance in a comparative study of the æsthetic ideas of the time.

After reviewing the history of the opera from its origin to his own day, Algarotti considers in detail all the component parts of the opera—the libretto, the music, the art of singing and of recitative, the ballet and the decorations ; offering suggestions in each

* "Saggio dall' Opera in Musica," Livorno, 1763. It was translated into English in 1767, and again in 1768.

case as to the reforms that are needed. He saw, like Gluck and like Wagner, that the first reform must be in the libretto, since no good dramatic music could be written to stupid or uninteresting words. "All these abuses must be abolished, and the helm again given into the hands of the poet, from whom it has been wrongly taken";* and the musician, having received a good poem to work upon, must follow the poet faithfully. After referring to the ancient union of music and poetry and their subsequent disruption, he goes on to say: "This great evil can only be remedied by the taste and understanding of the composer, by his keeping in view the purpose of the poet, and by agreeing to be guided by him, before even a note has been set on paper—as Lully by Quinault and Vinci by Metastasio; for this alone is the true and proper theatre-discipline." †

The overture was to anticipate the opera: "Among the other abuses and imperfections of the present-day opera one must be first considered, that strikes the ear immediately the opera commences. This is the symphony. It always consists of two *allegro* movements and one *grave*, makes as much noise as it can, is of the same invariable pattern, and is always conducted in the same manner. . . . Its chief function may be said to be the annunciation of the subject, and the preparing of the hearer for impressions that shall

* P. 225. I quote from the German translation of Algarotti's book: "Versuche über die Architectur, Mahlerey, und musicalische Opera," Cassel, 1769.

† Pp. 238, 239.

arise from the drama that follows ; it must consequently have a form suited to the whole, like the beginning of a good orator's speech. At the present day, however, the symphony is looked upon as something absolutely unconnected with the drama—a mere piece for trumpets and drums, whereby the ears of the audience may be temporarily captured and stunned.”*

A better recitative was wanted, together with a greater cultivation of *obbligato* recitative. “It appears as if our composers thought the recitative not worth any trouble ; it gives little pleasure, and can therefore expect little honour” ; † then he gives an account of the careful manner in which Jacopo Peri wrote his recitative. “It was manifold and varied, and modelled itself on the words. Now it was as rapid as speech itself, now it went slowly, bringing out significantly the inflexions and accents that spring from the might of passion. It was listened to with pleasure, because it was written with such diligence ; and frequently some trait in the recitative affected the hearer more powerfully than any aria of our own time has been able to do. Even to-day it pleases when it is in the *obbligato* form, accompanied by the orchestra ; and it would be better if it were more frequently so written.” ‡ Like Gluck, he wished to minimise the great disparity between the aria and the recitative. “Another good effect would result from the more usual employment of the *obbligato* form ; the marked contrast between the recitative and the arias would be lessened, and a finer agreement between the various parts of the opera

* P. 240. † P. 240. ‡ P. 242.

would result."* Trills and ornaments were incompatible with dramatic expression in the historical opera, where actual passions were supposed to be represented on the stage; † and he pointed out, as Addison had done, ‡ the absurdity of pausing in the music when such a word as *padre* or *figlio* occurred, in order to give a tender expression to these words, quite irrespective of the general tenor of the music. "These gentlemen fancy by such means to give to these words their proper *sentiment*, and at the same time to import a pleasing variety into their music. I take leave to say, however, that this is a *dissonance of expression*, unbearable to any rational being; that the composer must not express the sense of single words, but the sense of the whole passage. . . ." § In the same way he protested against the too frequent use of the *da capo* and the repetition of words: "And how long-winded and unbearable are those eternal repetitions and that unintelligent piling-up of words, simply for the pleasure of the music! These words should only be repeated where they are required by the circumstances of passion, and where the whole sense of the aria is at an end. The first part of the aria should seldom be re-introduced; this is a modern discovery, and quite contrary to the natural course of speech and passion, which never return on themselves; and when once

* P. 243.

† P. 231.

‡ See *The Spectator*, No. 18: "History of the Italian Opera."

§ Pp. 248, 249. See also Du Bos: "Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture," 5me ed., 1747, vol. i. p. 452.

the end is reached, and the fire is at its height, it is difficult to maintain this if what has gone before is repeated."*

The ritornelli are "too long, and generally superfluous. In a passionate aria, for instance, it is in the highest degree improbable that the actor should stand with his arms crossed, waiting for the ritornello to come to an end before he can give his passion play. And further, when the vocal part has actually begun, what use are the four violins in the accompaniment, except to drown it and make it unintelligible?" †

Better orchestration is needed, and resort must not be had to a too pedantic technique ; counterpoint is of no value when the composer's purpose is the expression of passion, though it has its uses in church music. ‡ A thorough reform is wanted in the aria : "Seldom does any one trouble himself to make his airs natural in method and conformable to the sentiment of the words ; and the many variations that are used to turn and wind about in them are rarely related to a common point of unity. The first thought of all our composers at the present time is to flatter and delight the ear in any way, and to be constantly surprising it. To move the heart, to keep the imagination on fire—what care they about this?" § Finally : "All these irregularities will never disappear, however, until the time when composers and singers shall no longer ignore the very foundation of music ; when the recitative, the most essential part of the drama, shall no longer be so

* P. 248.

‡ P. 254.

† P. 244.

§ Pp. 246, 247.

sadly disfigured and neglected, and when the arias themselves shall be delivered in a better manner." *

These extracts will be sufficient to show the close similarity between the reforms suggested by Algarotti and those actually carried out by Gluck, as well as formulated by him in his writings and conversations. Altogether, Algarotti's book is well worth the attention of the historian and the student ; it is one of the best of the eighteenth-century treatises on the opera.

It only remains to ask the question—Had Gluck seen Algarotti's work ? † It seems at least probable that he had become acquainted with it, for the book was well known in France, Germany and England ; ‡ and the close similarity between Algarotti's ideas and his own is remarkable.

* P. 261.

† Gluck, of course, began the reform of the opera with *Orfeo* in October 1762 ; Algarotti's essay was published in the beginning of 1763. What constitutes the great importance of the essay, however, is the almost literal agreement between the ideas expressed therein and those of Gluck's preface to *Alceste*. It will be remembered that this preface was published with the opera in 1769 (two years after the first performance of *Alceste*), and it is quite possible that Gluck had read Algarotti's essay before then.

‡ A translation was published in Glasgow in 1768.

CHAPTER III

WE are now in a position to look at Gluck's own ideas as set forth by himself. His great manifesto was the celebrated preface to *Alceste*, which ran as follows :—

“When I undertook to set the opera of *Alceste* to music, the object I had in view was to avoid all those abuses which the misapplied vanity of singers and the excessive complaisance of composers had introduced into the Italian opera, and which had converted one of the finest and most imposing of spectacles into one of the most wearisome and most ridiculous. I sought to reduce music to its true function, that of supporting the poetry, in order to strengthen the expression of the sentiments and the interest of the situations, without interrupting the action or disfiguring it with superfluous ornament. I imagined that the music should be to the poetry just what the vivacity of colour and the happy combination of light and shade are to a correct and well-composed design, serving to animate the figures without altering their contours.

“So I have avoided interrupting an actor in the warmth of dialogue, to make him wait for a wearisome ritornello, or stopping him in the midst of his discourse, in order that on some suitable vowel he may exhibit the agility of his fine voice in a long passage, or that

the orchestra may give him time to take breath again. I have not thought it my duty to hasten through the second part of an air when this second part was the most passionate and the most important, in order to repeat the words of the first part four times ; nor to finish the aria when the sense is not complete,* in order to give the singer the opportunity of showing in how many ways he can vary a passage. In a word, I have sought to banish from music all the abuses against which good sense and good taste have so long protested in vain.

“I have thought that the overture should prepare the spectators for the character of the coming action, and give them an indication of its subject ; that the instruments should only be employed in proportion to the degree of interest and of passion involved, and that there should not be too great a disparity between the air and the recitative, in order not to spoil the flow of the period, to interrupt the movement inopportunately, or to dissipate the warmth of the scene.

“I have thought, again, that my main task should be to seek a noble simplicity, and I have avoided parading difficulties at the expense of clearness ; the discovery of any novelty has seemed to me precious only in so far as it was naturally called forth by the situation, and in harmony with the expression ; lastly, there is no rule I have not thought it my duty to sacrifice willingly in order to make sure of an effect.

* Gluck himself has committed an equal absurdity to this in the aria in *Paris and Helen*, in which he finishes a three-syllable word on the second syllable, in order to end the musical phrase there. See p. 101.

“These are the principles by which I have been guided ; happily, the poem lent itself admirably to my design ; the celebrated author of *Alceste*, Signor Calzabigi, having conceived a new plan for the lyrical drama, in the place of flowery descriptions, useless comparisons, and cold and sententious moralizing, had substituted strong passion, interesting situations, the language of the heart, and a continually varied spectacle. Success has justified my views, and the universal approbation of a city like Vienna has convinced me that simplicity and truth are the only principles of beauty in works of art.

“At the same time, I know all the risks one runs in combating prejudices that are deeply and strongly rooted.”*

The preface to *Paris and Helen* has already been quoted, as well as various observations on his art made by Gluck in conversations with Corancez and others, and in letters to the French journals.

It will be observed how distinctly the statement in the letter to the *Journal de Paris* (12th October 1777), as to the equality of poetry and music, clashes with the above theory, that music should merely be the handmaid to poetry. In his argument with La Harpe, Gluck had said that music and poetry should stand in a relation of equality to each other, so that neither should appear to dominate the other. Marx notices the contradiction, and tries to explain it away.† “We

* Marx, i. 440-442 ; Desnoiresterres, pp. 65, 66 ; Barbedette, pp. 74, 75.

† Marx ii. 240. See also i. 447-450.

have to notice here what Gluck says of the relations between poetry and music in the opera ; the relation between them must be such that neither the music shall appear to have been made for the poetry, nor the poetry for the music ; that is to say, that each is to have its full rights, neither being subordinated or sacrificed to the other. This seems to be the complete theory, and affords the necessary correction to the mistaken representation of the Dedicatory Epistle. At the same time it may be pointed out to those who love to argue that in Gluck's work the music is sacrificed to the words, that here we have a weighty proof of his holding just the opposite opinion." The defence of Marx, however, is sophistical and unscientific, being dictated solely by the spirit of hero-worship, and a dim consciousness that Gluck must at any cost be made to appear self-consistent. It is more reasonable to look upon the two contradictory statements simply as expressions of Gluck's ideas at two different epochs. Every æsthetic theory must undergo modification at some time, and the relation between poetry and music that suggested itself to Gluck in the first days of his reforming zeal was different from that conceived by him when the earlier crudities had been softened down, and when, in the composition of *Armida*, he felt his power as a musician to be greater than it had ever been before. To try to harmonise Gluck's contradictory statements by a process of ingenious dialectic, and by reading into his theories the æsthetic of our own day, is to ignore the fundamental similarity between Gluck's own early ideas and those of almost every æsthetician of his time, and to forget that the old

theory of the subordination of music to poetry was due historically, as in the personal case of Gluck, to the relatively imperfect stage of development to which music had then attained. To understand completely the genesis and the working of Gluck's ideas we shall have to go very far afield into the æsthetic literature of the time. In dealing with him we are met with the difficulty that, unlike Wagner, he wrote very little in a systematic manner upon his art; and though with a little analysis we can discover in his music the mental characteristics and the æsthetic theories that helped to give it its distinctive quality, this is both more difficult and more unsafe than the deductions we could make from a reasoned system argued out in prose. Nevertheless, by bringing together the ideas that underlay the ordinary writings on music in the eighteenth century, we shall be able to recognise in these the theories that controlled Gluck's system of composition. Rarely has there been an epoch in which such æsthetic unanimity has prevailed as in the eighteenth century. Italy, France, Germany, and England turned out almost precisely the same ideas upon the function of music and its relations to poetry; and by reducing these to something like fundamental principles and comparing them with what we know of Gluck's verbally-expressed ideas, we shall be in almost as good a position to apply them to his principles of musical composition as if he had expressed himself voluminously upon his art.

Starting from the preface to *Alceste*, as the first revolutionary manifesto of the composer, we find that this resolves itself into two main factors. There is

on the one side the revolt against artificiality, the resolve to curb the power of the singers, to denude music of the foolish and superfluous ornaments by which it had been defaced, the desire to return to nature, to be simple and sincere—what, in fact, we may designate the destructive and polemical part of Gluck's faith. On the other side there is the declaration of what he held to be the true æsthetic function of music, its relation to poetry, to the other arts, and to nature. All his writings, indeed, group themselves round these two main points. On the one hand he wars with the abuses of the conventional opera; on the other he reveals his own views upon the æsthetic of music. Let us look at the intellectual and the social genesis of these two factors in his work.

In the preceding chapter we have seen that for many years before Gluck's reform, various writers had been calling attention to the absurdities and failings of the opera. This revolt against the folly of the music of the time was part of a wider feeling of dissatisfaction at the artificialities of both art and life. In France there was a strong feeling against the conventionality of the stage, to which voice was given by Diderot. In Italy the serious opera had degenerated into a mere lounge, where any amusement was permitted, and where the last thing that was thought of was to listen to the performance. Algarotti represents a numerous body of writers to whom this flaccidity was becoming more and more distasteful. On the other hand, the new intellectual life that was springing up in Germany was accompanied by a protest against mere formality

and imitation, and a desire to conduct both philosophy and art upon original lines.

Thus while the abuses of the current opera and the artificialities of contemporary life accounted for the revolutionary portion of Gluck's ideas, the same abuses and the same artificialities would in turn partly account for the cry of a "return to nature" and "imitation of nature," which was heard so plainly throughout the musical controversies of the time. But with this doctrine of the imitation of nature we step upon the ground of æsthetic theory, and have to examine the intellectual world of the eighteenth century upon that side of it that dealt with the relations of nature and art.

The theory that art imitates nature had been taken over in its crudest form from Aristotle's *Poetics*; and happening to coincide with a strong contemporary desire for greater simplicity and naturalness of life, the theory was carried to the grossest excess not only in the poetry and painting of the time, but also in the music. There was, in fact, little or none of that discrimination between the spheres and media of the various arts that underlies all our modern systems of æsthetic. Not only was the one faculty of the mind supposed to look at all the arts from the same standpoint, and to appreciate them all for the same qualities, but this faculty itself was thought to be more rational than imaginative. To the eighteenth-century mind, indeed, the world seemed to unfold itself in perfect clearness. The destructive work of the century in theology was mainly based on the idea of a primary delusion of the human race through priestcraft, and in

their abhorrence of any social structure that bore the marks of conscious human instrumentality from without, the philosophers fell into the fallacy of supposed "natural rights" and "natural beauty." In art, again, the best and most beautiful was necessarily that which was best and most beautiful in nature, and since the faculty that appreciated this primordial goodness or beauty was simply reason, this faculty became elevated into the one criterion of art and philosophy. That alone was valid which was capable of being brought within the focus of the reason; and anything lying beyond this sure and well-defined ground was a possible field for delusion and imposture. An æsthetic shape to be conjured up, a philosophical idea to be accepted, must come in the first place armed with a certificate of validity from the rational judgment; and ideas were valued less for their ministration to the hidden desires and unvoiced aspirations of men, than for their satisfaction of that general craving for external clearness which made their philosophy so pre-eminently objective. Of the mystic heights and depths beyond the full-visions conception of the moment, of those fields of tremulous light where the eye is charmed with the very indistinctness of the objects it sees, the typically eighteenth-century mind knew little and cared little. It was ill at ease in the world of the fugitive and the mysterious.

Among such a people, art of necessity stood upon a lower plane than in times when the current of life is warmer and more vaguely emotional. Since their ideal of philosophy was the free exercise of reason on things inward and outward, they naturally sought in art

another mode of presentation of those ideas which formed their basis of satisfaction in philosophy. That art springs from a different side of man's nature, and is directed towards a different end, never suggested itself to them. Its function was to cast upon the working of the mind, through concrete forms, that light which was cast through abstract forms by philosophy; and the sensuous medium of the art, through which it speaks, instead of being recognised as something that helped to determine the utterance and define the scope of the idea, had its claims set aside in favour solely of the idea itself. Thus their art, instead of being a series of presentations, through varying media, of varying impressions of life and nature—the variations being determined by the respective scopes of the arts—was a series of representations of the same impression through different media—variations, as it were, upon the same theme. It did not occur to them that a poetical idea, a pictorial idea, a musical idea, are essentially diverse things, neither of which can be properly expressed in the language of the others. The border-lines between the arts, and between thought and imagination, were not marked out or even supposed to exist; hence their confusion of æsthetic purposes. The poet was supposed to paint in words, the musician in sounds; the painter represented poems on his canvas; Michel Angelo was a great poet and Shakespeare a great painter. A distorted Aristotelianism invaded æsthetic criticism, and increased the confusion that already existed there. "The French of that time approached Poetry, as they approached Religion, as they approached the State, with the conviction that the

organ of understanding was able to produce intentionally and consciously what in reality has always been the product of other human faculties acting almost unconsciously ; they believed in inventors of religion as in inventors of constitutions. Hence a confusion of all the activities of the human mind. People believed that the Fine Arts could serve to explain abstract thought, which is allegory, and again that words might paint objects, which produced descriptive Poetry. The simple explanation that words, sounds, forms and colours are different languages for different orders of mental activity had been entirely lost sight of. Experience taught that none of these mental faculties could work when isolated, without the aid of the others ; the inference was drawn that each might do the work of the others. People wanted to express in forms and colours, that is, in the language of the Fine Arts, what can only be expressed in words ; and they wanted to express in words what can only be expressed in sounds, *i.e.*, Music.”*

There was along with this rational tendency in art a slight feeling here and there that the imagination had a more important function than was usually ascribed to it, but the objective tendency was much the stronger. With all their deep-reaching interest in art, and an analysis that was often acute and penetrating, the men of the eighteenth century for the most part missed the true centre of artistic creation—its pure synthesis of imagination. The remarks of every writer on the subject of music—Algarotti, Gluck, Rousseau, Diderot,

* Hillebrand, “Lectures on German Thought,” p. 94.

Du Bos, Harris, Beattie, as well as the lesser journalists—indicate a complete inability to construct a musical cosmos on the lines of music *per se*. In part, of course, we may attribute this to the comparatively low stage of evolution to which music as an independent art had then attained. The subordinate position which Gluck assigned to music in comparison with poetry is paralleled almost everywhere in the writings of the first three-quarters of the century, and was fundamental in the art-theories of the time. It was only natural that while the purely imaginative qualities of poetry were comparatively neglected, the imaginative quality of the still more intensive art of music should have fallen into even greater disregard. The imagination, as such, had small rights in the æsthetic of that epoch, being imperfectly understood and imperfectly defined from the reason; and Baumgarten expressed the opinions of his time when he held that the faculty that apprehended beauty was just a lower phase of reason itself.

While music thus suffered from an imperfect sense of the true functions of the artistic imagination, it suffered still more from the theories that attempted to make it, like poetry and like painting, an imitation of nature. The return to nature itself was on the whole a healthy sign in the art of the time, though it was frequently carried to excess, and though it reacted harmfully upon the arts. "How can you learn to draw," cries Diderot to the student in his *Essai sur la Peinture*, "by paying a poor devil so many francs per hour to imitate the action of drawing water? Go to the well, and watch the man who has no thought of

posing, and you will see how nature disposes of his frame." He returns to the same theme in the *Essay on Dramatic Poetry*: "A courageous actress has just got rid of her hoop-petticoat, and nobody has found her any the worse for it. Ah! if she would one day only dare to show herself on the stage with all the nobility and simplicity of arrangement that her characters demand; nay, in the disorder into which she would be thrown by an event so terrible as the death of a husband, the loss of a son, and the other catastrophes of the tragic stage, what would become, near her dishevelled figure, of all those powdered, curled, frizzled, tricked-out creatures? Sooner or later they would have to put themselves in unison. O nature, nature! we can never resist her."* A similar adoration of nature is observable throughout the æsthetic literature of the time. Algarotti incessantly urges the artist—the musician included—to imitate nature; † and sends him back to the "beautiful simplicity of nature." ‡ Avison praises the "noble simplicity" of Marcello, simplicity being considered an inalienable character of nature. Rameau took "la belle et simple nature" for model. § The word is constantly in the mouths of men on each side of the musical war, Gluckist and Piccinnist—Suard, Arnaud, La Harpe, Rousseau and Marmontel. ||

* "La poésie dramatique," sec. 21.

† Algarotti, p. 236. ‡ *Ib.* p. 251.

§ Preface to "Les Indes Galantes," Paris, 1745. See Reissmann, p. 98.

|| The revolt from the eighteenth century veneration for

This doctrine of a return to nature, commendable in itself when not pushed to an extreme, wrought infinite harm through an imperfect understanding of the meaning of the word and of the relations of nature and art. In the musical history of the eighteenth century we have particularly to note how music was placed in the

“nature,” and the contrast between their æsthetic and ours, may be incidentally illustrated from Diderot’s “Paradoxe sur le Comédien,” the thesis of which, to express it briefly and somewhat crudely, is that strong emotion, and a belief that he is the character he is representing, will make a bad actor, while the good actor has judgment and self-possession, but no sensibility. Falling into line with the general precept to imitate nature as she is, the more primitive opinion of the eighteenth century was that the best actor of any part would be he who had the most natural affinities with it. Thus Sainte-Albine, who may be said to have originated the discussion on the art of acting by his essay “Le Comédien,” in 1747, held what we may call the nature-theory in its most outrageous form. Here are some of his propositions in evidence: (1) “Gaiety is absolutely necessary to comedians, whose business is to excite our laughter;” (2) “No one but a man of elevated soul can represent a hero well;” (3) “Only those who are born of an amorous temperament should be allowed to play the parts of lovers.” (Quoted in Mr. William Archer’s “Masks or Faces?” p. 13.) Diderot himself leaned at one time to the extreme emotionalist position; but about 1770 he appears to have gone over to the opposite camp, and in the “Paradoxe” (which was probably written about 1773, though not published until 1830) he maintains that the essential qualification of the good actor is lack of sensibility. Here we have him expressing, in relation to the art of acting,

same category as the other arts, having for its supposed purpose the imitation of nature. The musician, true to Gluck's dictum that the music was to be to the poem what colour is to a picture, had to illustrate a subject given to him by a poet; the one furnished the design, the other added the colour; and the music was

just what we are now accustomed to say in the other arts as to the place of "nature" in the total effect. He argues that on the emotionalist theory a drunken man should give the best representation of drunkenness, and an athlete the best representation of a gladiator; on the other hand, that the good actor is always master of himself; that his tones and gestures in the moments of greatest passion are never precisely what they would be in a similar situation in real life, but are always carefully timed and modulated by the reason; that the function of the theatre is not to show things as they are in nature, but that the "truth" of the representation lies in "the conformity of the actions, the speeches, the expression, the voices, the movements, the gestures, with an ideal model imagined by the poet, and frequently exaggerated by the player." The advance in æsthetic that is represented by the "Paradoxe" may be seen by comparing it with any of Diderot's earlier panegyrics on "nature;" for example, with the passage in the "Poésie dramatique," in which he contends for closer imitation of actual life, and imagines the effect of "a real scene, with real dresses," and so on. In the "Paradoxe" his virile intellect was really anticipating the later theories of æsthetic. For the divergence of these from the theory of the excellence of nature-imitation see Goethe's remarks on Diderot's "Essay on Painting." As Mr. Morley has said, "the drift of Goethe's contention is, in fact, the thesis of Diderot's 'Paradox on the Comedian.'" (See his "Diderot," vol. i. pp. 331-347, and vol. ii. pp. 72-77.)

to be a picture in sounds. As this attitude of the musician towards nature was the most important element in the musical æsthetic of the day, and as it has vital bearings on the theory of Gluck, it will be advisable to illustrate it still further, by quotations from contemporary literature.

Writing on March 1st, 1770, in reference to the opera *Silvain*, by Marmontel and Grétry, Grimm attributes the weakness of the former's libretto to his "small dramatic talent; for it is much easier to be outrageous than to be simple; to imagine romantic manners and events than to find true events and paint manners as they are, in an interesting fashion;"* a theory that would quickly place out of court all imaginative art and literature. Again, in 1780 he speaks of a great success at the Tuileries—the *Carmen Seculare* of Horace, set to music by Philidor—and praises the careful manner in which the musician follows and illustrates the successive pictures of the poet, as if the sole function of the composer were to supply the utterances of the poet with an illustration in sound, appealing to the reason through the ear, just as a representation of the scenes on canvas would appeal to the reason through the eye. Throughout the writings of the eighteenth century, again, we find the claims of melody constantly thrust forward before everything else, for in melody the idea was expressed, while harmony to them was nothing more than the accentuation or support of the idea. "The Abbé Du Bos is very anxious to credit the Low Countries with

* Grimm's "Correspondance littéraire," 1813, ii. 191.

the honour of the musical Renaissance ; and this could be admitted if we gave the name of music to a continual piling-up of chords ; but if harmony is merely the common basis, and melody alone constitutes the character, not only was modern music born in Italy, but it appears that in all our living languages, Italian music is the only one that can really exist.* The whole argument of Rousseau's "Lettre sur la musique française"—which was evoked by the Buffonist war—is based on the assumptions that the opera has to depict life as it finds it, that to do this it must express in the aria, and still more in the recitative, the similarity between the passion and the object that has called it forth, and that the medium of this expression is melody, supported by harmony and varied by rhythm. The musician must simply give more elaborate utterance to the ideas contained in the words ; and the musical range of words, if only they are sonorous and melodious, is as wide as if they were being employed in poetry or in prose. Thus the French, he says, will never have good music of their own, because their language has not the sweetness and limpidity of the Italian! †

Evidently in such a musical system as this there is little scope for that quality of the music of our later

* Rousseau, "Lettre sur la musique française," 1st ed., 1753, p. 45, note.

† One is reminded of the saying of Charles V. that the German language was only fit to use in addressing horses. On Rousseau's theory, music should be an impossibility in Germany. See also a similar dissertation in Burney's "History of Music," vol. iv.

opera, which interprets a character or a situation not alone on the skeleton lines presented by the poet, but with a height and breadth and depth of intuition which, while necessarily linked to the verbal substratum, is yet born of a separate order of imagination ; the final expression being a joint product of the poetical and musical intuitions fused into one. For the musician to turn his thoughts inward and evolve an organism whose articulation should have been wholly esoteric, would have been an unheard-of aberration in the France of the eighteenth century. Hence the outcry against those purely instrumental compositions which, having no verbal basis, and therefore no appeal to the rational faculties and no similarity with "nature," must be judged by an esoteric imagination whose synthesis is not less complex and not less coherent than the synthesis of the understanding, though less palpable and less communicable. Since these exercises of the pure musical imagination had no connection with any objective form outside the musician's mind, they were destitute of utility, and fit only for a race of barbarians ; this was the frame of mind that saw "barbarism" in Gothic architecture. "Another thing, which is not less contrary than the multiplication of parts to the rule I have just established, is the abuse, or rather the use, of fugues, imitations, double designs, and other *arbitrary and purely conventional beauties*,"* which have scarcely any merit beyond that of difficulty vanquished,

* As if blank verse, or the sonnet form, or the simulation of round bodies on a flat canvas, or the pictorial device that gives the illusion of distance, were not also

and which have all been invented in the early periods of art in order to make science pass for genius. I do not say it is quite impossible to preserve the unity of melody in a fugue, by cleverly conducting the attention from one part to another in pursuit of the subject; but this toil is so painful that few can succeed in it, and so ungrateful that even success can hardly compensate for the fatigue of such a work. All that which only seeks its purpose in noise, as well as the greater number of our much-admired choruses, is equally unworthy of occupying the pen of a man of genius or the attention of a man of taste. As for counter-fugues, double fugues, inverted fugues, and other difficult fooleries which neither the ear can suffer nor the reason justify, these are evidently relics of barbarism and bad taste, which only exist, like the porticoes of our Gothic churches, for the shame of those who had the patience to make them."*

Rousseau's whole argument, indeed, goes upon the assumption that the aim of the musician is to embody in sound a creation intrinsically the same as that embodied by the poet in words, or by the painter in lines and colours. It is the function of music, he implies, to place the hearer in communication with those external facts which give birth to the idea, by representing this idea in processes corresponding to

"arbitrary and purely conventional." Rousseau's theory cuts its own throat, for all art is arbitrary in the sense that it employs certain extra-natural devices to obtain certain effects.

* "Lettre," p. 44.

those of the other arts. A music which should neglect to do this, and should choose instead to occupy itself with matters entirely of its own concern, "would be languishing and expressionless, and its images, denuded of force and energy, would paint few objects in a great many notes, like those Gothic writings, the lines of which, filled with figured letters and characters, contain only two or three words, and enclose very little meaning in a great space."* Since the intellectual application of the opera comes entirely from the words, to which the music supplies an accentuation and a kind of imitation, the musician must not depart from either the verbal sense or the verbal rhythm. Thus according to Rousseau, the best music would be that in which the prosodial and rhythmic form of the verses exactly coincides with the time and rhythm of the melody.† Hence

* "Lettre," p. 16. In the preface to the Encyclopedia, D'Alembert, after discussing poetry, painting and architecture as arts of imitation, says of music: "Finally music, which addresses itself at the same time to the imagination and to the senses, occupies the third position in order of imitation; not that its imitation is less perfect in those objects which it proposes to represent, but because it seems limited in this respect to a small number of images; which we should attribute not so much to the nature of the art as to the want of invention and resource in the greater number of those who cultivate it. . . . All music that does not paint something is merely noise, and were it not for custom, that unnatures everything, would give scarcely more pleasure than a succession of harmonious and sonorous words, denuded of order and connection." ("Discours sur l'Encyclopédie," ed. Bibl. Nat. pp. 43, 45.)

† *Ib.* pp. 9, 10.

also the importance attached to declamation, which imitates, under a more or less artistic form, the accents, intervals, rhythm, cadence, and progression of actual passion, in opposition to the theory and practice of our own day, where the comparatively undeveloped poetical form becomes merged in the infinitely more developed musical form. And *obbligato* recitative, which to the eighteenth-century ear expressed so much, was in part a further development of the principle of imitation, by means of the continuance in the orchestra of the illustrative function momentarily suspended by the voice.

We shall see still more clearly the comparatively low estimation in which music was held in the eighteenth century, the subordinate function which it was supposed to perform in reference to poetry, and the extent of the false æsthetic that tried to make music an art of imitation, by looking at the opinions of contemporary belletrists who instituted comparisons between the arts.

In 1744 Harris published a "Discourse on Music, Painting and Poetry," in which he works out a comparison between the three arts on the basis of the question, "Which imitates nature most effectually?" They agree, he says, by being all mimetic or imitative, and he states the mimetic powers of music thus: "In the natural or inanimate world, music may imitate the glidings, murmurings, tossings, roarings, and other accidents of water, as perceived in fountains, cataracts, rivers, seas, &c. The same of thunder, the same of winds, as well the stormy as the gentle. In the animal world, it may imitate the voice of some animals, but chiefly that of singing birds. It may

also faintly copy some of their motions. In the human kind, it can also imitate some motions and sounds ; and of sounds those most perfectly, which are expressive of grief and anguish.”* The doctrine of the excellence of nature-imitation could not further go than this.

He sums up the case as between painting and music in the sentence, “that musical imitation is greatly below that of painting, and that at best it is but an imperfect thing ;”† while of poetry and music he remarks that, “inasmuch as musical imitations, though natural, aspire not to raise the same ideas, but only ideas similar and analogous ; while poetic imitation, though artificial, raises ideas the very same, inasmuch as the definite and certain is ever preferable to the indefinite and uncertain, and that more especially in imitations, where the principal delight is in recognising the thing imitated—it will follow from hence that—even in subjects the best adapted to musical imitation, the imitation of poetry will be still more excellent.”‡ Here the characteristic note of the eighteenth century is clearly heard.

The palm is finally given to poetry, because it can imitate more important things, and imitate them better. “Poetry is therefore, on the whole, much superior to either of the other mimetic arts ; it having been shown to be equally excellent in the accuracy of its imitation ; and to imitate subjects, which far surpass,

* “A Discourse,” &c., in Harris’s “Works,” 1801, vol. i. p. 40.

† *Ib.* p. 41.

‡ *Ib.* pp. 47, 48.

as well in utility as in dignity.”* And we seem to be listening to Gluck himself when we hear that the value of music is that it raises the same mood as that of the poetry, and so strengthens the effect of the latter. Harris, indeed, seems to be nearer the modern æsthetic of music when he deprecates too strong an insistence on the merely imitative function of the art, and says that the power of music “consists not in imitations, and the raising ideas, but in the raising affections, to which ideas may correspond.”† But that in this also he is the true offspring of his century is seen in his next argument, that the music must still be the handmaid of the poetry, and that its chief value is the aid it gives the mind in the comprehension of the poetical idea. “And here indeed, not in imitation, ought it to be chiefly cultivated. On this account also it has been called a powerful ally to poetry. And further, it is by the help of this reasoning that the objection is solved, which is raised against the singing of poetry (as in operas, oratorios, &c.), from the want of probability and resemblance to nature. To one, indeed, who has no musical ear, this objection may have weight. It may even perplex a lover of music, if it happen to surprise him in his hours of indifference. But when he is feeling the charm of poetry so accompanied, let him be angry (if he can), with that which serves only to interest him more feelingly in the subject, and support him in a stronger and more earnest attention; which enforces, by its aid, the several ideas of the poem, and gives them to his

* “A Discourse,” &c., in Harris’s “Works,” 1801, vol. i. p. 55.

† *Ib.* p. 58.

imagination with unusual strength and grandeur ;”* there being apparently no perception of the value of the music for its own sake in this apology for its union with poetry.

And once more we hear the note of the eighteenth century in Harris’s dictum that instrumental music is lower than vocal music, because in the former the mind has no concrete suggestions from poetry to carry it along. “From what has been said it is evident that these two arts can never be so powerful singly, as when they are properly united. For poetry, when alone, must be necessarily forced to waste many of its richest ideas, in the mere raising of affections, when, to have been properly relished, it should have found those affections in their highest energy. And music, when alone, can only raise affections which soon languish and decay, if not maintained and fed by the nutritive images of poetry. Yet must it be remembered, in this union, that poetry ever have the precedence ; its utility, as well as dignity, being by far the more considerable.”† Thus Harris perpetrates the common fallacy of his epoch, and fails to perceive that music and poetry are arts occupying different spheres, employing different media, and appealing to different

* “A Discourse,” &c., in Harris’s “Works,” 1801, vol. i. pp. 58, 59.

† *Ib.* pp. 59, 60. Compare also Webb : “If painting is less mimetic than poetry, music, as a mimetic art, must rank below painting ; since it cannot specify the subjects of its various movements, its imitation of the passions must be extremely uncertain and indefinite. For example, the tender, melting tones that can indeed express love, suit

orders of imagination ; that the achievements of music, and more especially of instrumental music, must not be judged by a criterion drawn from poetry ; and that while certain musical creations have no need of words, there are correspondingly many orders of poetry that are insusceptible of musical accompaniment.

Earlier in the century, the abbé Du Bos had published his "Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture," and in a few chapters at the end of his first volume had tried, somewhat in the manner of Harris, to express the relation between poetry, painting and music. "It remains now," he begins, "to speak of music, as the third of those means which men have invented to give a new force to poetry, and to render it capable of making a greater impression on us ;" * thus again exhibiting the current idea that the sole function of music was to assist the mind in apprehending the ideas of poetry. "Wherefore as the painter imitates the strokes and colours of nature, so the musician imitates the tones, accents, sighs, and inflexions of the voice ; in short, all those sounds by which nature herself expresses her sentiments and passions. These, as we have already observed, have

also the expression of the related emotions of kindness, friendship, pity, &c. And how can we distinguish the hasty motions of anger from terror and other violent disturbances of the soul ? As soon, however, as poetry and music combine, we are no longer in uncertainty ; we recognise the consonance of the tones and the idea, and the dual expression serves to illustrate a particular passion." Quoted in "Algarotti," pp. 237, 238.

* *Op. cit.* vol. i. sec. 45.

a surprising power of moving us, because they are the signs of passions, instituted by nature, from whom they receive their energy." Like Harris, he argues that music is a mimetic art. "In the next place, the rhythm gives a new *vraisemblance* to the imitation in a musical composition, because it adds to that imitation of the progression and movement of natural sounds and noises which has already been achieved by the melody and the harmony. Music therefore forms its imitations by the help of melody, harmony and rhythm; just as painting makes its imitations by means of lines, chiaroscuro, and local colours."*

He even manages to say a good word for instrumental music, on the ground that it is really mimetic. "Though this kind of music is purely instrumental, yet it contains a true imitation of nature. . . . The truth of the imitation in a symphony consists in its resemblance to the sound which it is intended to imitate. There is truth in a symphony composed to imitate a tempest, when the melody, harmony and rhythm convey to our ear a sound like the noise of the wind in the air, and the roaring of the waves dashing against each other or breaking on the rocks." And he sums up boldly thus: "The first principles therefore of music are the same as those of poetry and of painting. Music, like the other two arts, is an imitation; and it cannot be of any value unless it conforms to the general rules of these two arts as to the choice of its subjects, its probability, and other matters;" which is the eighteenth-century theory in its most naked and unashamed form. Yet Du Bos, who

* *Op. cit.* vol. i. sec. 45.

thought acutely about his subject, and to whom Lessing was under obligations, throws out one or two good hints to the composer about imitating the general sentiment of a passage rather than a particular word ; and answering the objection against the probability of the opera, rightly says that the same objection holds against the use of Alexandrines in tragedy ; and that the want of probability in opera is atoned for by the pleasure the music gives us. He has the penetration, too, to observe what so many of his contemporaries and successors had overlooked, that not all poetry is suitable for music, and that the kind most easily allied with it is that which deals with sentiments rather than with images and descriptions.

It is evident from what has been said that music in the eighteenth century stood on a lower plane relatively to the other arts than it does in our own day. Being comparatively undeveloped, it occupied much the same relation to the poetry of the times as did the music in the Greek world to the contemporary poetry. Aristotle held that music was the most "imitative" of all the arts ; although with him its imitative function lay rather in the domain of feelings and ethical qualities than in the world of natural objects, as in the writings of the eighteenth century. Its dependent position in Greek culture is shown in Plato's objection to instrumental music : "When there are no words it is difficult to recognise the meaning of harmony or rhythm, or to see that any worthy object is imitated by them" ;* a sentence which might have come from

* *Laws*, ii. 669 E.

some æsthetician of the eighteenth century. It was nothing less than inevitable that in the time of Gluck music should be looked upon simply as a pigment for the adornment of the poetry. The purely sensuous side of art was in no case, and least of all in that of music, appreciated at its full value.* The analogy of Gluck, that music bears the same relation to poetry as the colour of a picture bears to the design, finds its counterpart in the widely held contemporary theory that it was in the form that beauty really found its expression, and that the colour was at best an additional ornament, serving to heighten the effect of the

* Madame de Staël may be taken as expressing the more modern ideas on the question of words and music in the following passage from her "De l'Allemagne": "The fine arts require instinct rather than reflection; the German composers follow too closely the sense of the words. This is a great merit, it is true, in the eyes of those who like the words more than the music; and of course it is indisputable that a disagreement between the sense of the one and the expression of the other would be unpleasant; but the Italians, who are the true musicians of nature, make the airs conform to the words in a general manner only. In romances and vaudevilles, where there is not much music, one can submit to the words; but the great effects of melody must go straight to the soul by an immediate sensation. Those who have not much appreciation of painting in itself attach great importance to the subjects of pictures; they want to get from them the same impressions that are produced by dramatic scenes. So is it with music. When one is not greatly susceptible to it, one exacts a faithful conformity to the slightest shades of meaning in the words; but when it moves us to the

design.* Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the æsthetic of the eighteenth century is this insistence on the ancillary nature of music, and the attempt to make it pictorial in manner and effect.† Look, for illustration, at some passages from Gluck's own writings :

“I sought to reduce music to its true function, that of seconding the poetry.”

“I held the opinion that the music should be to the poem what the lights and shades are to a good design,

foundations of our soul, the attention given to anything but the music is merely an importunate distraction ; and provided that there is no opposition between the poem and the music, we abandon ourselves to what is always the more expressive art. For the delicious reverie in which it plunges us annihilates the thoughts which the words would express, and the music awakening in us the sentiment of the infinite, everything that tends to particularise the object of the melody must diminish its effect.”

* This was the opinion of Winckelmann and of Kant. See Knight's “Philosophy of the Beautiful,” i. 53, 59.

† As an exception to the general theory of the inferiority of poetry we may note that in 1765 the Chevalier de Chastellux published an “*Essai sur l'union de la Poésie et de la Musique*,” in which he held that the music should dominate the poetry in opera. The essay drew forth the commendations of Metastasio, who held the current theory; and it was quoted by the anti-Gluckists in the literary war. See Burney's “*Memoirs of Metastasio*,” ii. 316–335. Burney is wrong in saying that Algarotti's essay had not then appeared. It was published two years before that of Chastellux.

serving to animate the figures without altering their contours."

"I had to seek truth of colouring [in *Paris and Helen*] in the different natures of the Spartans and the Phrygians, by contrasting the rudeness and savagery of the former with the delicacy and effeminacy of the latter."

"Holding, as I do, the opinion that the melody in my operas is merely a substitute for declamation, it was necessary at times to imitate the native rudeness of my heroes; and I have thought that in order to maintain this character in the music, it would not be a fault to descend occasionally into the trivial."

"The imitation of nature is the end which both poet and composer should set before themselves; that is the goal after which I have striven. . . . My music tends only to greater expressiveness and to the enforcement of the declamation of the poetry."

"I have tried [in *Armida*] to be painter and poet rather than musician."

"I have discovered the means of making each character express himself in such a manner that you can recognise at once, from the style of expression, who it is that is speaking, *Armida* or a *confidante*, &c."

"In composing, I try to forget that I am a musician."

"I might perhaps have written something more beautiful from a musical point of view, and varied it so as to please your ears; but in that case I would only have been a musician, and would have been untrue to nature, which I must never abandon."

Everywhere there was this tendency to restrict the

sphere of music as an independent art, to clip its wings and prevent its soaring above the sister arts of poetry and painting. Men seemed to have a nervous horror of purely musical pleasure for its own sake, and felt a difficulty in moving about among the shadowy creations of absolute music. They were almost strangers to the esoteric delight that future generations were to feel in music as a self-existent art. "How does the musician obtain his grand effects?" writes Rousseau. "Is it by dint of contrasting movements, multiplying harmonies, notes and parts? Is it by heaping design on design, instrument on instrument? All this hurly-burly, which is only a clumsy attempt to atone for the lack of genius, would strangle the melody instead of animating it, and would destroy the interest by distracting the attention. Whatever harmony may be produced by several parts being well sung together, the whole effect of these beautiful melodies vanishes as soon as they are all heard at once, and the only effect remaining is that of a succession of harmonies, which, whatever one may say, is always cold when not enlivened by a melody; so that the more one clumsily heaps up melodies, the less agreeable and flowing is the music, because it is impossible for the ear to entertain several melodies at the same time, and because from the effacement of one impression by another there results nothing but confusion and noise. If music is to be interesting, if it is to bear to the soul the sentiments intended to be roused there, every part must concur in fortifying the expression of the subject; the harmony must only serve to render the subject more energetic; the accompaniment must em-

bellish it, without either obscuring or disfiguring it; the bass, by a uniform and simple progression, must in some manner guide both the singer and the hearer, without either of them being conscious of it; in a word, the whole effect must at each moment bear to the ear but one melody, and to the mind but one idea.* The theory that the melody conducted the intellectual current of the music, and that the harmony was simply an agreeable colouring to it, is an indication of the backward state of music as an art, and falls into line with the argument of Baumgarten and of Winckelmann, as applied to the pictorial arts, that the beauty and the meaning of a picture lie in the design, to which the colour is wholly subordinate.

Rousseau proceeds with a remark that throws some light on the many unison passages we meet with in Gluck's music. "This unity of melody appears to me an indisputable rule, and one not less important in music than unity of action in a tragedy: for it is founded on the same principle and directed towards the same object. Further, all the great Italian composers observe it with a care that sometimes degenerates into affectation; and to any one who reflects it is evident that from their observance of this rule their music draws its greatest effect. It is in this great rule that we must seek the explanation of those frequent unison accompaniments which we remark in Italian music, and which, strengthening the idea of the melody, at the same time render its tones more gentle, more dulcet, and less fatiguing for the voice."† And since

* "Lettre," pp. 34-36.

† "Lettre," pp. 36-37.

this unity of melody must be the great aim of the composer, harmony must play a subsidiary part, and content itself with merely enforcing the main idea above it. "If the melody is of such a nature as to exact some additions, or, as our old musicians would say, some *diminutions*, which add to the expression or the pleasure without thereby destroying the melodic unity, so that the ear, which would perhaps censure these additions if supplied by the voice, approves of them in the accompaniment and is greatly affected by them, without ceasing to attend closely to the melody—then the skilful musician, by managing them carefully and employing them with taste, will embellish his subject and render it more expressive without destroying its unity; and even if the accompaniment were not exactly similar to the voice part, in combination they would form but one melody. . . . But to make the violins play a part on one side, the flutes on another, the bassoons on another, each with a different strain, and with scarcely any connection between them, and to call this chaos 'music,' is to insult equally the ears and the judgment of the auditors." * The duet, he gravely tells us, "*is not according to nature*; for nothing is less natural than to see two persons speaking at the same time, either to say the same thing or to contradict one another, without even listening to or answering each other; and even if this supposition might be admitted in some cases, it certainly could not be admitted in Tragedy, *where such indecency is consistent neither with the dignity of the*

* "Lettre," pp. 40, 42.

persons speaking, nor with the education we may suppose them to possess."* And therefore the only safe rule is to follow the primordial principle of the unity of melody—to make the parts of the duet *follow* each other and thus constitute a single melodic idea; or, if it is absolutely necessary for the parts to combine, they should proceed by simple intervals, such as thirds or sixths! it being presumably not indecent and not inconsistent with the dignity of the heroes and the education we may suppose them to possess, to sing in simple intervals, though it might be to sing in any others. And whatever dissonance, Rousseau goes on, occurs to imply that the actors are momentarily transported by their passion beyond the bounds of reason, must not last more than a moment; "for when the agitation is too strong it cannot last, and whatever is beyond nature no longer touches us." †

In the treatment of the overture the same desire for

* "Lettre," p. 48; see also his "Dict. de Musique," art. "Duo." The brilliant La Harpe, it will be remembered, was also struck with this idea. The more primitive opinion of the French *littérateurs* was that the opera as a whole is not according to nature. Saint-Evremond had been shocked that in the opera "they sang throughout the whole piece; as if the persons represented had made a ridiculous agreement to treat in music both of the commonest and the most important affairs of life. Can any one imagine a master calling his valet, and *singing* his orders to him?"—and so on. ("Au duc de Buckingham sur les Opéras.") See Castil-Blaze, "De l'Opéra en France," Paris, 1820, vol. i. p. 97.

† "Lettre," p. 49.

pictorial treatment became evident, as witness Rousseau's suggestion to Gluck for the overture to *Alceste*. "To remedy all this I would have suggested that the overture should be composed of two parts of different character, but both treated in a sonorous and consonant harmony; the first, bearing to the heart a sweet and tender gaiety, would have represented the felicity of the reign of Admetus and the charms of the conjugal union; the second, with a more broken rhythm, and by more agitated movements and more interrupted phrases, would have expressed the anxiety of the people as to the malady of Admetus, and would have formed a very natural introduction to the herald's announcement at the beginning of the work." *

The ballet, again, affords an illustration of their passion for the "imitation of nature." The object of their art being to stimulate ideas rather than emotions, this function could to a certain extent be performed by the ballet, which was a kind of musical commentary on a theatrical situation. The eighteenth century mind seemed to be able to *think* in the ballet, to arrange movements, as the poet arranges words, the musician sounds, the painter forms and colours, so as to exhibit a microcosm of thought and action. "Jean George Noverre (1727-1810) in his *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets*, in 1760, strove for a reformation in the ballet on the same principles which Gluck employed for the opera. He condemned stereotyped forms of set dances, and demanded a plot for the ballet; expression should be the task of the dancer,

* Rousseau, "Œuvres," 1793, vol. ix. p. 587.

with nature for his model, and the ballet-master should be both poet and painter."* These were practically the conditions which Gluck tried to realise in his ballets.

Thus the ideas exhibited in Gluck's prefaces and in his music were the almost universal ideas of the time. From the foregoing quotations it has been abundantly shewn that the whole of the eighteenth-century æsthetic of music was based upon a few fundamental principles that were inwoven with the very texture of their culture. Almost without exception, every writer upon the arts held that music, like poetry and painting, is a mimetic art, and that its function is to imitate nature; that simplicity should be the aim of the composer; that music should be subordinated to poetry; that the melody expressed the idea, while the harmony added a little agreeable colouring; that music without poetry was ineffectual because it lacked the concrete and definite ideas which poetry afforded; all confused art with nature; all were lacking in the most characteristic feature of our modern æsthetic, the appreciation of musical beauty and musical delight for their own sakes. Some held all these ideas, others held part of them; but there is an unmistakable similarity between

* Otto Jahn, "Life of Mozart," ii. 21. Compare also Algarotti: "The dance must be an imitation of nature, painting the passions and affections of the mind by means of the body's motions to an accompaniment of music. It must speak to the eyes, and offer them a picture. The dance, moreover, must have its exposition, its entanglement, and its *dénouement*; it must be the quintessential representation of an action." ("Versuche," &c., p. 270.)

the opinions of all the musical æstheticians of the epoch. Even Beattie, who published a very intelligent essay on poetry and music, and who criticised the theory of "nature-imitation" with some acuteness, agreed with his contemporaries that music could only be heard to fair advantage in conjunction with poetry; and this not because the musical pleasure was thus increased, but because the poetry could narrow down the more expansive art to the gauge of the every-day understanding. "I grant that by its power of raising a variety of agreeable emotions in the hearer, it proves its relation to poetry, and that it never appears to the best advantage but with poetry for its interpreter."* Again: "Yet it is in general true, that poetry is the most immediate and most accurate interpreter of music. Without this auxiliary, a piece of the best music, heard for the first time, might be said to mean something, but we should not be able to say what. It might incline the heart to sensibility; but poetry, or language, would be necessary to improve that sensibility into a real emotion, by fixing the mind upon some definite and affecting ideas."† The æsthetic of

* "An Essay on Poetry and Music, as they affect the Mind." 3rd ed., London, 1779; p. 119.

† *Ib.*, pp. 149, 150. Twining, the editor of Aristotle, is also noticeable as having surrendered the imitation theory of music, in his dissertations on poetical and musical imitation prefixed to the "Poetics" (1789). (See Phillimore's edition of Lessing's "Laokoon," p. xlvii.) At the end of the third volume of Burney's "Memoirs of Metastasio" there is a rather rambling dissertation on the question of whether music is an imitative art or not.

music in the eighteenth century, look where we will, was essentially the same.

Burney notices the remarks of Twining, who "confines musical imitations to the raising emotions and ideas. And I think the former will include the passions. There are mere instrumental movements which awaken ideas of joy, sorrow, tenderness, melancholy, &c. Thus far it may be allowed the title of an imitative art" (pp. 364-367). Of course this is really not "imitation" at all in the sense which that word currently bore in the eighteenth century. Such passages as these of Twining and Burney show the difficulty felt even at that time in shaking off the influence of Aristotle. They were conscious that music is not really a mimetic art, yet felt bound somehow or other to square their ideas with the words used by Aristotle in his "Poetics." In the 1812 edition of his book, Twining himself calls attention to the confusion created by calling all the arts "imitative."*

* See note at end of the book.

CHAPTER IV

WE are now in a position to look at the practical working of Gluck's theories. According to his own confession he tried, in the greater part of his later operatic career, to subordinate music to poetry; and this tendency, as well as the attempt to "paint" in music, is perfectly discernible in his work. The desire to be pictorial, indeed, frequently led him and his contemporaries into the perpetration of absurdities. Although Gluck had too much sense of artistic fitness to think he could give the hearer a picture, for example, of the sea, by writing a rolling species of accompaniment, as some musicians have tried to do, he yet aimed frequently at impressing the ear less with reference to the imagination, by calling up emotional reminiscences of scenes similar to those he wished to suggest, than with reference to purely external characters of the scene, that might indeed affect the eye, but were essentially incapable of any imaginative suggestion through the medium of the ear. We saw how in an early work he had aimed at a kind of pictorial representation in the aria; and in his six great operas there are many instances of the same tendency. All this, of course, was simply part of the "nature" delusion, and of the consequent confusion of æsthetic ideology and the lack of recognition of the

boundaries between the arts; it was thought that since the object existed in nature it could be represented by art, and by music as well as by any other art. Even in the case of *Armida*, where Gluck, probably with a reminiscence of the warmth of the music he had written, tried to formulate, in his letter to the *Journal de Paris*, a theory of equal co-operation between poetry and music, he had also declared that his method was more that of the painter and the poet than of the musician. The result of this was that he attempted to define his characters by giving each of them music of a different order, this difference being manifested in the *tempi* and the rhythms. But these, it will be observed, are the most *physical*, and, so to speak, the most external of the varieties of which music is capable; yet Gluck would have found it impossible to "paint" character in the way he intended except by these purely physical means. For music, as an art of esoteric emotion, affects us in intension rather than in extension; that is, the composer trusts to the playing upon our emotional experience by the music, and the evocation by sympathy of the mood he wishes us to feel, rather than to the projection upon the mind, through the ear, of the images of those external shapes which a picture would exhibit to the eye. Gluck himself comes to grief over his theory. Where his boasted differentiation of character reveals itself in *Armida* is mainly in the characters of Phénice and Sidonie, and there need be no hesitation in saying that here the differentiation is utterly puerile. One can only smile at the almost childish trust of the composer in this clumsy way

of marking out one character—or rather one type of character—from another ; for his method after all does not really define the characters of Phénice and Sidonie as persons, but merely as types. And where he is at his best, as in the treatment of the more passionate portions, where Rinaldo and Armida are the actors, his theory of “painting” character breaks down utterly. Here, where the differentiation should be strongest and most decided, there is absolutely none of that pictorial difference between the characters such as he had aimed at in depicting Phénice and Sidonie ; each speaks the natural musical language of passion, and no attempt is made to “paint” either of them by a superficial distinction of rhythms and *tempi*. The roughest examination of Gluck’s theory serves to discover the weakness of it. If such a method of musical procedure can serve to distinguish a light and sportive character from one that is serious and passionate—as that of Phénice from that of Armida—it ought to be possible to distinguish in the same way two different phases of the same passion, which it is obviously incapable of doing ; and still less can it give distinctiveness and definition to such external differences as those of sex and station. “You announced,” we might say to Gluck, “that in *Armida* it could at once be understood, from the varying styles of the music, which character was speaking. We admit that by giving to Phénice and Sidonie a style of music that is lighter, more sportive, and more tripping than that allotted to Armida, you have indicated the difference between a serious character and a gay one. But that in itself does not prove the possibility of painting in

music. If there is anything in your theory, you ought to be able not only to distinguish in your music a passionate character from one that is not passionate, but also one variety of the same passion from another. No doubt by writing pompous and measured strains for a soldier, and gay and tripping music for a country girl, you could suggest the difference between them in some such manner as the painter would. But let us take Rinaldo and Armida in their love-scenes. How, by your method, will you give us to understand which of the two is singing at any time? In no way can you do this. The natural language of passion is the same in Rinaldo as in Armida; there is no melody and no harmony, no time and no rhythm, no intervals and no modulations, that are more appropriate to the man than to the woman; and even in your own music they speak the same tongue. Your theory is inapplicable to music in its higher forms; and where it partially succeeds is in those purely physical characteristics that, by association, bring music for the time being to the lower level of the pictorial arts."

Thus the analogy with painting, when pushed beyond the merest externalities, breaks down entirely; and as a matter of fact Gluck's theory is here again contradicted by his practice, for he has frequently, in his later operas, employed in one connection music that had primarily been written years before in quite another connection. Yet on his own pictorial principles this should be impossible. It would follow from his theory that the musical representation of a situation or a character should represent that situation or that character, and none other; and it should be as im-

possible, if the imitation of nature had been successfully performed, to employ the representation in quite other circumstances as it would be in a parallel case in painting. It was not Gluck's practice that was wrong, but his theory ; he did right in taking an emotional expression from one work and applying it to another ; but he was wrong in not seeing how his procedure failed to square with his theory. Had his analysis of the nature of music gone further, he would have recognised the truth that is so evident in our own day, that music is an art of generalised expression, in which the one inward emotion may be equally applicable to a thousand concrete situations, and that it is useless to attempt to give to music the definiteness that belongs to poetry or painting. The analogy with the pictorial arts, used as Gluck used it, is the most glaring of fallacies. It was not his error alone ; it was the error of his century to regard the spheres of the arts as interchangeable, and to look upon music mainly as the colour that filled and beautified the outline given by the words. This tendency to regard music as the inferior of poetry, which we meet with everywhere in the writings of the pre-Romanticists, is, it need hardly be said, wholly at variance with Romantic theory and practice. The French of the eighteenth century had no conception of that fluidity of mind that is so characteristic of our own day, when music exists in an intellectual world of its own, in which the composer can live and move and have his being, and create complete and coherent forms, without the slightest aid from poetry. To Rousseau and Harris, to Du Bos and Algarotti, to Beattie and Metastasio,

poetry was the more important factor in opera. We have seen how both Calzabigi and Gluck plunged headlong into an arid theory of declamation—a theory from the consequences of which Gluck was saved, in practice, by his more essentially musical nature. But this fact, taken in conjunction with a host of others, indicates that the first impulse to musical composition came from a definite poetical idea, to which the musician consciously and deliberately tried to add a kind of coloured commentary.

Critics and historians have remarked in a general way upon this peculiarity of Gluck's system of æsthetic, and upon its inconsistency not only with our musical methods but with those of Gluck himself, without, however, tracing the matter scientifically to its historical causes. In this category falls the criticism of Berlioz, which is worth quoting, in spite of its haphazard character, as a statement of the antagonism between the musical æsthetic of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth, and of the internal inconsistencies between Gluck's theory and his practice.

After quoting the preface to *Alceste*, Berlioz proceeds as follows :

“Setting aside some which we shall specify later, these principles are so excellent that they have been for the most part followed by the majority of the great composers of all nations. Now in promulgating this theory, the necessity of which ought to have been apparent to any one with the smallest artistic feeling or even the simplest common sense, has not Gluck rather exaggerated the consequences of it here and there?

We can scarcely resist this conclusion after an impartial examination of it, and even he himself, in his own works, has not applied it with rigorous exactitude. Thus in the Italian *Alceste* we find recitatives accompanied merely by the figured bass and probably by the chords of the cembalo (harpsichord), as was the custom at that time in the Italian theatres. Yet there certainly results from this species of accompaniment and recitative a *very marked disparity* between the recitative and the aria.

“Several of his airs are preceded by a fairly long instrumental solo : then the singer had perforce *to keep silence, waiting for the termination of the ritornello*. Further, he frequently employs a form of aria which, on his own theory of dramatic music, ought to be proscribed. I refer to those repetition-airs of which each part occurs twice, without any reason for the duplication, just as if, in fact, the public had demanded the *encore*. Of this kind is the air in *Alceste* :

Je n'ai jamais chéri la vie
Que pour te prouver mon amour ;
Ah ! pour te conserver le jour,
Qu'elle me soit cent fois ravie !

“When the melody comes to the cadence on the dominant, why recommence, without the least change either in the vocal part or in the orchestra :

Je n'ai jamais chéri la vie—&c.?

“Most assuredly the dramatic sense is spoilt by such a repetition ; and if any one should have refrained from sinning in this way against naturalness and probability

it is Gluck. Yet he commits the same error in almost all his works. We do not find examples of it in modern music, and the composers who succeeded Gluck have been less lax in this respect than he.

“Now when he says that the music of a lyrical drama has no other function than that of adding to the poetry just what the colour adds to a design, I believe him to be fundamentally mistaken. The task of the composer in an opera, it seems to me, is of quite another importance. His work contains both design and colour, and, to continue the comparison of Gluck, the words are the *subject* of the picture, and little more. Expression is not the sole aim of dramatic music; it would be as maladroit as pedantic to disdain the purely sensuous pleasure which we find in certain effects of melody, harmony, rhythm or instrumentation, independently of their connection with the painting of the sentiments and passions of the drama. And further, even if it were desired to deprive the hearer of this source of delight, and not to permit him to re-animate his attention by turning it away for a moment from its principal object, we would still be able to cite a goodly number of cases where the composer is called upon to sustain alone the interest of the lyrical work. In the *danses de caractère*, for example, in the pantomime, in the marches, in every piece, in short, in which the instrumental music takes the whole of the work upon itself, and which consequently have no words, what becomes of the importance of the poet? In these cases the music must necessarily contain both design and colour. . . .

“Here again (in his theory of the overture), in

exaggerating a just idea, Gluck has gone beyond the real facts; not, this time, to restrict the power of music, but on the contrary to attribute to it a virtue which it will never possess; it is when he says that the overture ought to indicate the *subject* of the piece. Musical expression cannot go so far as that; it can certainly depict joy, sorrow, gravity, sportiveness; it can mark a decided difference between the joy of a pastoral people and that of a nation of warriors, between the sorrow of a queen and that of a simple village girl, between a calm and serious meditation and the ardent reveries that precede an outburst of passion. Again, borrowing from different nations the musical style that is proper to them, it can make a distinction between the serenade of a brigand of the Abruzzi and that of a Tyrolese or Scotch hunter, between the evening march of pilgrims, sunk in mysticism, and that of a troop of cattle-dealers returning from the fair; it can contrast extreme brutality, triviality, the grotesque, with angelic purity, nobility and candour.* But if it tries to overstep the bounds of this immense circle, music must of necessity have recourse to words—sung, recited or read—to fill up the gaps left by the purely musical expression in a work addressing itself at the same time to the intellect and to the imagination.

* Berlioz is of course over-stating the case for music here, in the very act of arguing against Gluck's over-statement. No purely instrumental piece can "paint" marches in such a way as to acquaint the hearer with the fact that it is a band of pilgrims or a crowd of cattle-drovers that is marching. See his own following remarks on the *Alceste* overture.

Thus the overture to *Alceste* will announce scenes of desolation and of tenderness, but it cannot inform us either of the object of the tenderness or the cause of the desolation; it will never tell the spectator that the husband of Alcestis is a king of Thessaly condemned by the gods to die unless some one gives his life for him; yet this is the *subject* of the piece. . . .”*

The truth of what Berlioz has thus crudely expressed may be seen by comparing the æsthetic of the eighteenth century at any point with that of the nineteenth. In music the contrast is particularly striking. To state it briefly, it may be said that while Gluck and his contemporaries regarded music as the inferior of poetry in any union of the arts, we in this day regard it as the superior. The fundamental error of the last century was in imagining that music could amalgamate with any kind of poetry. It may be that with the relatively imperfect development of music at that time, it was difficult for them to conceive it as anything more than just a new colour on the poet's palette. The future evolution of music has demonstrated their error. Whatever may have been the connection between the two arts in their infancy, both poetry and music have now learned to stand alone. Thus by far the greater quantity of poetry is in no need of music, and a great quantity of music is in no need of words. If the two arts are to combine in one expression, it must be on the borderland between them.

* Berlioz, “A travers chants,” pp. 154-157.

The qualities that poetry shares with painting and with prose speech in its more concrete aspects, are for the most part not merely in no need of musical accompaniment, but utterly inimical to music ; while, on the other hand, the state of mind into which we have to be transported in order to enjoy a purely instrumental composition like a symphony, is one with which the concrete utterances of prose or poetry are wholly inassimilable. But between the two extreme poles of the arts there is a neutral field where each has something in common with the other, and it is here alone that they can combine artistically. The musical faculty is indeed a further growth of the faculty that is evidenced in poetry ; this is the explanation of the fact that the ordinary devices of poetry, such as rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration, are quite superfluous in words intended for music, because the æsthetic pleasure and coherence given by these devices are met with in a much more specialised form in the music itself. Music really implies a higher and subtler nervous condition than that implied in poetry ; and an age in which the more concrete ideas of poetry are held fit to dominate the music in any combination of the two arts, is one of lower nervous activity than an age in which the stream of thought is carried on in music alone, without suggestion from words. It is noticeable, in this connection, how pre-Romantic thought in Germany was tending to recognise, even in the eighteenth century, the higher imaginative existence of music. Lessing, in his "Laokoon," threw new light on artistic ideology, showing that modes of procedure peculiar to one art were inadmissible in another, though he did not include

music in his analysis.* Herder, however, who had a good knowledge of music, looked forward to a combination of the arts in which the maximum of expression would be achieved with the minimum of contest between the individual idiosyncracies of each; it was to be an ideal union, between a *new* poetry and a *new* music; that is, he saw the error of Gluck and his fellows in supposing that music could be artistically united to words of every kind. In Herder's ideal combination, each art was to adapt itself to the other; poetry, in fact, was to "stand truly in the middle, between painting and music." "A poem must be what the inscription is to a picture or a statue—an *explanation, a guide to lead the stream of music by means of words interspersed in its current. It must be heard, not read; the words must only breathe life into the emotional frame of the music, and this must speak and act, work on the emotions, and utter the thought, only following the spirit and general idea of the poet.*" †

* It appears to have been Lessing's intention to discuss music in the second part of the "Laokoon," and he has left a few posthumous notes on the art. (See Phillimore's edition, pp. 328-332.) For Lessing's views of the function of music between the acts of a tragedy, and the earlier opinions of Scheibe, a German musician who wrote on music and the drama some twenty years before Gluck began the reformation of the opera, see the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, Nos. 26, 27.

† See Haym's "Herder," I. ii. 476. The passage occurs in a letter sent by Herder to Gluck in 1774, along with the former's drama, *Brutus*. Mr. Nevison ("Life of Herder," p. 188) suggests that Herder minimised the

That is the practical wisdom of the whole theory of musical and poetical combination; and, curiously enough, Rousseau seems to have had a foreshadowing of it when he wrote: "It is a deep and important problem to resolve, *how far we can transmute language into song, and music into speech. On a true solution of this question depends the whole theory of dramatic music.*"* But this was not destined to come within the scope of the pre-Romanticists; and it is a far cry even from this to Gluck's "I sought to reduce music to its true function, that of supporting the poetry. . . . I imagined that the music should be to the poetry just what the vivacity of colour and the happy combination of light and shade are to a correct and well-composed design." Gluck's definite, almost concrete imagination, impelled him away from the synthesis both of pure subjectivity, as in the later symphony, and of the modified subjectivity of esoterically definite musical thought permeated with exoterically definite poetical thought, as in the modern opera; his intellectual world was definitely indicative poetry, helped out by an indefinite suggestion of music. The outside world impressed itself upon him, not, as with later musicians, as something to be imaginatively infiltrated in the reconstructive soul, and then re-expressed in terms not of the pure representation of externality,

claims of poetry in order to ingratiate himself with Gluck; but besides there being no evidence of such an intention, it is clear that Herder's letter revealed a system of æsthetic quite at variance with that of the composer.

* "Œuvres," ix. 578.

but of the imaginative transformation of externality, but rather as something whose outward life for the reason and inward life for the imagination were one. In Romantic art the impression is one thing, the expression another ; with Gluck and the pre-Romanticists generally they were thought to be one and indivisible. Romantic art knows there are multitudes of things not susceptible of imaginative representation, and in the things it does represent, the final form is less an image of these themselves than of something rich and rare into which they have been transmuted by the inner consciousness. Gluck, with his admiration for "nature," saw nothing that could not be represented in art, and, in his attempted representation, failed to perceive the part that should be played by the imagination. Thus his art inevitably tended to such a representation of life as is given in painting. His contemporary, the ebullient Michael Kelly, unconsciously hit upon the psychological truth when he wrote : "For describing the strongest passions in music, and proving grand dramatic effect, in my opinion no man ever equalled Gluck; he was a great painter of music ; perhaps the expression is far-fetched, and may not be allowable, but I speak from my own feelings, and the sensation his descriptive music has always produced on me."* It was this externality of purpose and conception that made the eighteenth century despise Gothic art as "barbarous"; and Marmontel thought to deal a decisive blow of disparagement at

* "Reminiscences of Michael Kelly," 1826, vol. i. p. 256.

Gluck by comparing him with Shakespeare ; an insult which, we may note, was promptly resented by Gluck's adherents.*

We have seen how closely Gluck's ideas and practice were related to the current æsthetic conceptions of his epoch ; and if we now ask the main reason for the enormous difference between the music of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth, we shall find it in the great nervous change that has come over western Europe in the last century and a quarter. The whole art of the epoch of Gluck indicates a slower beating of the pulse in that day than in this. Great nervous excitation in poetry tends to give birth to the lyrical qualities that are more cognate with music, and while it may be said that in our time poetry is trying to reach forward into music, in the last century music seemed to be anxious to live on the lower slopes of poetry. Gluck's temperament, as we have already had occasion to think, seems to have been at bottom more poetical than musical. It was only occasionally that he was so profoundly moved as to lose that calm command of self that usually distinguished him ; when he does so lose himself, his music begins to approach romantic music in warmth of colour. Even while he was writing his later works, there was a new movement beginning in Germany which was destined to break quite away from the semi-classical world of the middle of the eighteenth century, and find its ultimate expression in music. The morbid world of *Werther* was typical of a new element that was being

* See Desnoiresterres, pp. 159, 160.

introduced into the life of Europe, an element of vague unrest, of boundless longing, of overwrought nerves and of pessimistic philosophies of life ; and it was in music alone, the most nervous and most expansive of all the arts, that this new spirit could find its adequate expression.* Simultaneously with the general intensifying of nervous life, there came an extraordinary development of what may be called the vocabulary of music, and when the later romantic school came to its operatic work, it found ready to its hand the most varied and the most expressive language that art has ever breathed through.

The result was that music and poetry began to change places, and that from being the mere handmaid of poetry, music came to be by far the richer and

* The correlation between the changes in literature or art from age to age, and the simultaneous modifications of the nervous system, has not yet received all the attention it deserves. The question is of course primarily one for medical science, and in the present state of criticism we can only speculate as to these correlations. At any rate, so long as we admit that the individual's mental world is coloured by his physique and habits of life, there seems no reason for denying that a general type of nervous system may predominate in a certain epoch, and that the current art or literature may be the expression of this type. See, for example, a valuable passage in Maxime Du Camp's "*Souvenirs littéraires*," in which he attributes the morbid literature of his early days to the depleted vascular systems that were then so prevalent. "Often . . . I have asked myself whether this depression may not have

the more emotional art. It is impossible to discuss in this place the development of the opera since the time of Gluck ; but it may suffice to point out how completely his æsthetic is contradicted by the practice of our own day. We have no thought now of following with faithful humility the concrete meanings of the words ; we aim rather at generalising as far as possible the emotional expression of the music, only employing the words as so many points of crystallization and support. To take an extreme case in order to show the divergence between the music of Gluck and that of the modern opera, there are times when we are so indifferent to what the characters are actually saying that the words might almost be dispensed with ; the

been the outcome of physiological causes. The nation was exhausted by the wars of the empire, and the children had inherited their fathers' weakness. Besides, the system of medicine and hygiene then prevalent was disastrous. Broussais was the leader of thought, and doctors went everywhere lancet in hand. At school they bled us for a headache. When I had typhoid fever I was bled three times in one week, sixty leeches were applied, and I could only have recovered by a miracle. The doctrines preached by Molière's *Diabolo* had lasted on to our day, and resulted in the anæmic constitution so frequently met with. Poverty of blood combined with the nervous temperament makes a man melancholy and depressed" ("Souvenirs," Eng. trans. i., 113). On the general question see a very suggestive essay by Dr. Verity, "Changes produced in the Nervous System by Civilisation," published in 1837.

music of itself is competent to express all that the situation requires. The passionate duet at the end of *Carmen* might be sung to mere vowels and would be just as passionate; for when music is at its greatest height the less nervous art of poetry can add no new suggestion of beauty or of meaning. This of course is an extreme illustration, and is only meant to show the existence in modern music of elements Gluck never dreamed of. In the very nature of things it is impossible for music ever again to hold that subordinate relation to poetry which it held at times in the opera of the eighteenth century.

And yet, when all has been said that comparative criticism can say, when we have reduced Gluck to his proper place among the thinkers and artists of his own time, and despoiled his theories of any absolute significance for the musical drama of the present or the future, one finds it hard to maintain to the end the attitude of sober, unmoved science towards him. It is difficult to hold back the impulse to *lâcher l'admirable* in speaking of the giant who did so much that was honest and sincere in an age of degradation and conventionality. Though his ideas are paralleled in the writings of other men of his day, his service to art is yet incomparably greater than anything that was done by even the greatest of his contemporaries. It was one thing to say the reform of the opera was necessary; it was another and more admirable thing to achieve the reform in reality. Philosophers and theorists and satirists might have written for ever without the slightest effect on music itself, had not Gluck found

the means to incarnate the new ideas in living art. The philosophers and theorists and satirists, in fact, had been writing for generations, and the condition of the opera was simply becoming worse day by day. It was the happy combination in Gluck of thinker and artist that enabled him to convert good theory into equally good practice ; and it was the robust pugnacity of his nature that enabled him to override all the opposition of conventionality and prejudice, and not only do good work in music himself, but force it by sheer strength of purpose upon the consciousness of the public that music had higher purposes than those of merely sensuous gratification. To have changed and consolidated the whole structure of the opera ; to have insisted on the necessity of making the verbal basis sound and sane ; to have repressed the vanity and egotism of the singers, and to have galvanized the lazy, languid orchestra into life ; to have aimed at breaking down antagonism between the aria and the recitative, and making the latter an instrument more worthy of playing its part in the musical drama ; to have struck away all the pernicious excrescences that disfigured the aria, and to have made it a genuine expression of passion ; to fill the accompaniment with a significance as great as that of the voice-part itself ; to make the opera dignified and humanistic, giving music its worthy place as a factor in the lives of thinking men ; to make the overture elucidatory of the coming drama ; to work with a coherent principle throughout the whole opera, giving unity to what had formerly been a mere *pasticcio* of irrelevant elements,

this was no small labour for the life of one man in such an age.

And he has had his reward. The musician speaks a language that is in its very essence more impermanent than the speech of any other art. Painting, sculpture, architecture and poetry know no other foe than external nature, which may indeed destroy their creations and blot out the memory of the artist. But the musician's material is such that, however permanent may be the written record of his work, it depends not upon this but upon the permanency in other men of the spirit that gave his music birth, whether it shall live in the minds of future generations. Year after year the language of the art grows richer and more complex, and work after work sinks into ever-deepening oblivion; until music that once thrilled men with delirious ecstasy becomes a dead thing which here and there a student looks back upon in a mood of scarcely tolerant antiquarianism. In the temple of the art a hundred statues of the gods are overthrown; and a hundred others stand with arrested lips and inarticulate tongues, pale symbols of a vanished dominion which men no longer own. Yet here and there through the ghostly twilight comes the sound of some clear voice that has defied the courses of the years and the mutations of taste; and we hear the rich canorous tones of Gluck, not perhaps with all the vigour and the passion that once was theirs, but with the mellowed splendour given by the touch of time. Alone among his fellows he speaks our modern tongue, and chants the eternal passions of the

race. He was indeed, as Sophie Arnould called him, "the musician of the soul;" and if we have added new strings to our lyre, and wrung from them a more poignant eloquence than ever stirred within the heart of Gluck, none the less do we perceive that music such as his comes to us from the days when there were giants in the land.

NOTE TO PAGES 273, 274.

The note on Twining is, as it stands, somewhat misleading. It would appear from it that Twining's opinions on the imitative function of music had altered between the date of the first edition of his book (1789), and that of the second edition (1812). As a matter of fact, Twining always protested against a too slavish interpretation of Aristotle's words in reference to music, and held that the term "imitative," in the sense that it applied to Greek music, was quite inapplicable to much of the music of modern times. The error in the note in question was due to my being misled by the note on Twining in Sir Robert Phillimore's edition of the "Laokoon." He apparently had only seen the 1812 edition of Twining's "Aristotle." Twining, as I have said, protested against the "imitation" theory in his 1789 edition. Not possessing this edition at the time the passage in the text was written, I was led astray by Sir Robert Phillimore's quotation from the edition of 1812; but a copy having come into my hands in the interval, I saw that it was wrong to attribute to Twining any desire to make out music to be an imitative art, from a slavish adherence to Aristotle. Twining's position may be seen from the

following passage :—“ The ideas and the language of the ancients on this subject were different. When *they* speak of music as imitative, they appear to have solely, or chiefly, in view, its power over the affections. By imitation they mean, in short, what we commonly distinguish from imitation, and oppose to it, under the general term of expression ” (p. 46).

I may mention, in passing, that Sir Robert Phillimore errs when he writes that “ It was early in the nineteenth century that Mr. Twining became acquainted, through a French translation, with the ‘Dramaturgie’ of Lessing, and, in his own admirable translation of, and dissertation upon, Aristotle’s poetry (!) Twining remarks upon the ‘many excellent and uncommon things’ which Lessing’s work contained . . . ” The note in question occurs in the 1789 edition of Twining.

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